

Groton Daily Independent

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Saturday, Sept. 16

Common Cents Community Thrift Store, 209 N Main, open 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 3:45-4:15 p.m.; SEAS Mass, 4:30 p.m.

Junior High Volleyball Tournament at Matchbox in Aberdeen.

Volleyball Tournament at Hamlin, 9 a.m.

Junior High Football Jamboree at Webster, 10 a.m.

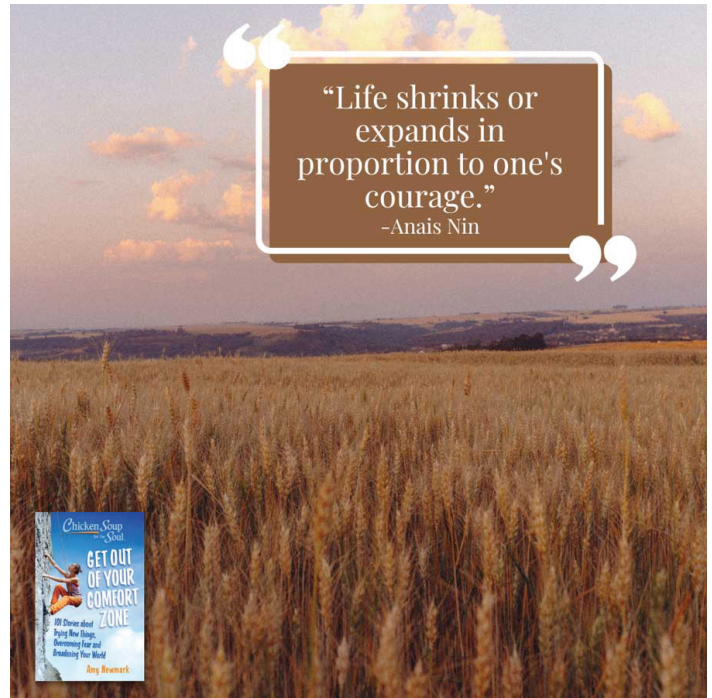
Youth Football jamboree in Groton.

Sunday, Sept. 17

St. John's Lutheran/Zion worship with communion. St. John's at 9 a.m., Sunday school at 9:34 a.m., Zion at 11 a.m.

Groton Daily Independent
PO Box 34, Groton SD 57445
Paul's Cell/Text: 605-397-7460

OPEN: Recycling Trailer in Groton
The recycling trailer is located west of the city shop. It takes cardboard, papers and aluminum cans.
© 2023 Groton Daily Independent



“Life shrinks or expands in proportion to one's courage.”
-Anais Nin

Emmanuel Lutheran: Worship with communion, 9 a.m.; Sunday school, 10:15 a.m.; Choir, 7 p.m.

Groton CM&A: Sunday School at 9:15 a.m., Worship Service at 10:30 a.m.

Catholic: SEAS Confession, 7:45-8:15 a.m., SEAS Mass, 8:30 a.m.; Turton Confession, 10:30-10:45 a.m.; Turton Mass, 11 a.m.

First Presbyterian Church: Bible Study, 9:30 a.m.; Worship, 11 a.m.

United Methodist: Conde worship, 8:30 a.m.; Coffee Hour, 9:30 a.m.; Sunday School, 9:30 a.m.; Groton worship, 10:30 a.m.

Monday, Sept. 18

Senior Menu: Turkey sub with lettuce, tomato and cheese, pease, Macaroni salad, peaches.

St. John's Lutheran Christian Literature Circle, 7:30 p.m.

Emmanuel Lutheran: Bible Study, 6:30 a.m.

The Pantry at Groton Community Center, 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

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The Bulletin by Newsweek

World in Brief

final. He called the kiss "consensual," despite Hermoso's filing a complaint of sexual assault against him.

Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz has stepped up his feud with Kevin McCarthy, branding the House Speaker "McFailure," and warned he will table votes to remove him from position unless concessions are made.

European regulators levied a \$368 million fine against TikTok, after finding it culpable of failing to protect children's privacy.

The Kremlin has confirmed that Vladimir Putin and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un did not sign any agreements during their meeting this week, despite speculation the pair would sign an arms deal to help Russia's war effort in Ukraine.

Beijing has said it will impose sanctions against U.S. defense firms Northrop Grumman and Lockheed Martin for providing weapons to Taiwan.

In the ongoing war in Ukraine, senior Russian airborne commander Vasily Popov has reportedly been killed in action in Ukraine, as Moscow's elite units continue to suffer high casualty rates...

TALKING POINTS

"We are going to drag Biden and everyone who covered up his crimes through the headlines day after day, month after month, and prove to the country the entire Democrat party is corrupt and can't be trusted. So no matter which candidate runs for president if they take Biden out, everyone will know the Democrat party is filled with liars and traitors." Rep. Majorie Taylor Greene posted on X, referring to the impeachment inquiry into President Joe Biden launched this week by House Speaker Kevin McCarthy.

Bodies are "littering the streets, washing back up on shore and buried under collapsed buildings and debris. In just two hours, one of my colleagues counted over 200 bodies on the beach near Derna." Bilal Sablough, regional forensics manager for Africa at the International Committee of the Red Cross, painted a grim picture in the aftermath of devastating flooding in Libya.

"Is there anybody here celebrating their own special occasion today? Anyone's birthday? Oh, I think it is someone's birthday. A certain Prince Harry, the Duke of Sussex, is 39 today. Happy birthday! Let's sing along." An Invictus Games announcer led the crowd in song as Prince Harry rang in his birthday in Dusseldorf..

What to Watch in the Day Ahead

Iowa Faith & Freedom Coalition host the annual Fall Banquet at the Iowa Events Center in downtown Des Moines from 3:30 p.m. ET. Nine Republican presidential candidates will participate today, including Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, former Vice President Mike Pence, and former South Carolina Gov. Nikki Haley.

Focus on America is scheduled to hold the "Patriots Unite" event in Huntsville, Alabama, with several whistleblowers from diverse fields, including American journalist James O'Keefe, cardiologist Dr. Peter McCullough, and others.

Rosh Hashanah, the Jewish New Year, continues through sundown on Sunday, Sept. 17.

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VA PACT Act Groton Legion Hall

Veterans, Bring Your Families to VA's
PACT Act Presentation
(Legion Membership not required)

Monday September 18th 7:00PM

Aaron Walburg (Brown County) Veterans Service Officer

Open to: Vietnam, Gulf War, Cold War, Post 9/11 Veterans and Survivors

Family Members or dependents of a deceased Veteran may qualify for various VA benefits due to the additional disabilities defined in the PACT Act if they meet eligibility requirements. More information for survivors is available online at [VA.gov/PACT](https://www.va.gov/PACT)



**GHS 50th
Class
Reunion**

The GHS Class of 1973 will be celebrating 50 years. Anyone can come down to the Legion the evening of Saturday, Sept. 16 to visit the members of the class.

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Football: Deuel 24, Groton Area 6

Groton Area Tigers

Rushing: 19 carries for 9 yards

Keegan Tracy 4-10

Christian Ehresmann 2-6

Taylor Diegel 2-12

Korbin Kucker 10-9

Lane Tietz 1-(-10)

Passing:

Lane Tietz completed

17 of 26 for 143 yards, 1 TD, In interception

Receivers:

Keegen Tracy 5-69

Taylor Diegel 4-33

Christian Ehresmann 4-31

Korbin Kucker 4-31

Fumbles: Had 1, lost 0

Penalties: 3 for 15 yards

Defensive Leaders

Christian Ehresmann 14 tackles, 1 sack

Brevin Fliehs 8 tackles

Logan Ringgenberg 7 tackles, 1 sack

Lane Tietz 1 interception

Record: 3-2 (NEC: 3-2)

Next Game: Friday at Webster

Scoring:

First Quarter

4:57: Deuel: Oliver Fieben, 87 yard pass from Trey Maaland. (PAT Brandon Fieben kick)..... 7-0

2:14: Deuel: Safety - Robert Begalka 9-0

Second Quarter

4:36: Deuel: Trey Maaland 49 yard run. (PAT: Brandon Fieben kick) 16-0

Third Quarter

6:49: Groton: Christian Ehresmann, 8 yard pass from Lane Tietz. (PAT: Run failed) 16-6

2:51: Deuel: Trey Maaland, 19 yard run. (PAT: Robert Begalka run) 24-6

Clark/Willow Lake Cyclones

Rushing: 28 carries for 46 yards

Trey Maaland 22-215, 2 TD

Gavin Kloos 9-27

Owen Haas 1-3

Oliver Fieben 1-0

Passing:

Trey Maaland completed

6 of 15 for 157 yards, 1 TD, 1 Interception

Receivers:

Oliver Fieben 1-87, 1 TD

Gabe Sather 2-45

Dexter Unzen 2-17

Gavin Maaland 1-8

Fumbles: Had 0, lost 0

Penalties: 12 for 120 yards

Defensive Leaders

Trey Maaland

Kaden TeKrony

Reed VanWormer

Oliver Fieben 1 interception

Record: 5-0 (NEC: 4-0)

Next Game: at Dakota Hills

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Deuel spoils GHS Homecoming

Groton Area's homecoming was spoiled by the undefeated Deuel Cardinal Friday at Doney Field, 24-6. The Tigers had a golden opportunity to score on the first drive with the ball inside the 10 yard line, but they were unable to break through the endzone.

Deuel scored one touchdown in each the first, second and third quarter and added a safety on a Tiger miscue in the first quarter. Groton Area would score in the third quarter on an eight yard pass play from Lane Tietz to Christian Ehresmann.

The Tigers had nine yards rushing and 143 yards passing with Keegen Tracy catching the ball for 69 yards. The Cardinals had 46 yards rushing and 157 yards passing with Oliver Fieben having 87 yards receiving.

Defensively, Ehresmann had 14 tackles and a sack to lead the Tigers. Each team had an interception. Deuel was penalized 12 times for 120 yards.

The game was broadcast live on GDILIVE.COM with Mike Nehls doing the play-by-play and Jeslyn Kosel running the camera. The sponsors of the game were Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Dairy Queen, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency, Krueger Brothers, Locke Electric and Rix Farms/R&M Farms.



Lane Tietz
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Keegen Tracy
(Photo by Paul Kosel)

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And a little Tiger will lead them!
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Taylor Diegel
(Photo by Paul Kosel)



Full time shift supervisor opening at Ken's Food Fair, Groton SD.

Looking for a hard working self motivated individual with leadership skills and willing to take on responsibilities.

Pay will depend on experience. Benefits available will discuss at interview.

Apply at Ken's in Groton SD.

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Groton Community Transit

P.O. Box 693
205 E. 2nd Ave.
Groton, SD 57445

Dear Groton family,

Thank you, Thank you, for your loyalty and support through all of these years! We appreciate everyone of you!!

Although we have tried our best to keep the expenses low, our operating costs have increased significantly due to global factors in recent times. After carefully reviewing the finances, we have made a tough decision of increasing our transportation prices.

The change will take effect on Oct. 1, 2023 our rides within the town of Groton will be \$2 per ride, \$4 roundtrip. And, medical rides to Aberdeen from Groton will be \$20 roundtrip. Until then, you can take benefit of the old prices. We will honor old prices till Sept. 30, 2023!

We also offer a discounted pass for \$30 which includes 22 one way rides within Groton area!

We are a non-profit transportation service for the needs of all age groups of people!

As always, thank you for your loyalty and we thank you for your understanding and continued support!

Sincerely,

Dam Hansen & Eugenia Strom

Groton Transit

Steve Smith, Sherry Koehler, Topper Tostad, Dick Kolker

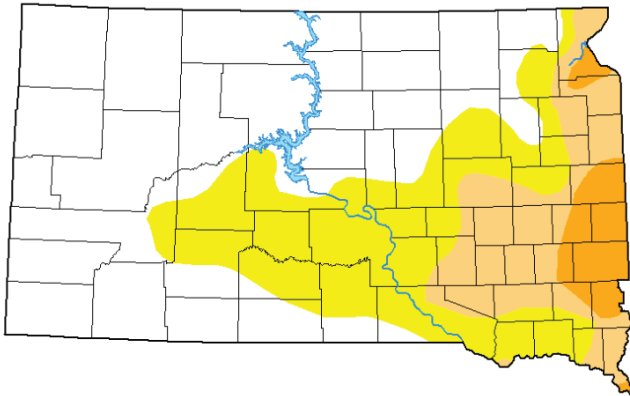
Drought Classification

- None
- D0 (Abnormally Dry)
- D1 (Moderate Drought)

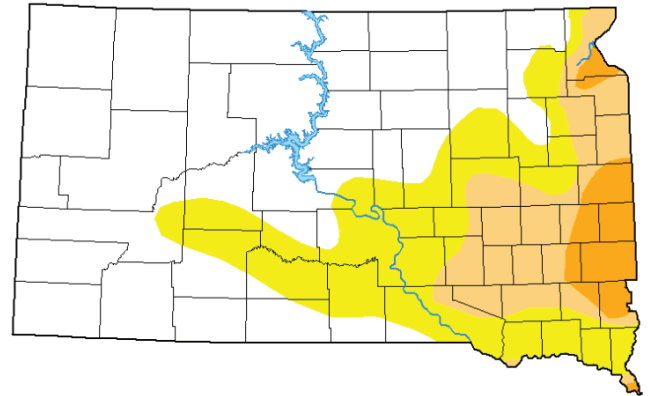
- D2 (Severe Drought)
- D3 (Extreme Drought)

- D4 (Exceptional Drought)
- No Data

Drought Monitor



September 12



September 5

Heavy rainfall (1.5 to 3 inches, locally more) prompted a 1-category improvement to southwestern Kansas along with parts of Nebraska. Also, NDMC's drought blends were a factor in these improvements. Conversely, 30-day SPEI and soil moisture supported small degradations across eastern parts of Kansas. Worsening soil moisture indicators led to an expansion of severe drought (D2) across northeastern North Dakota.

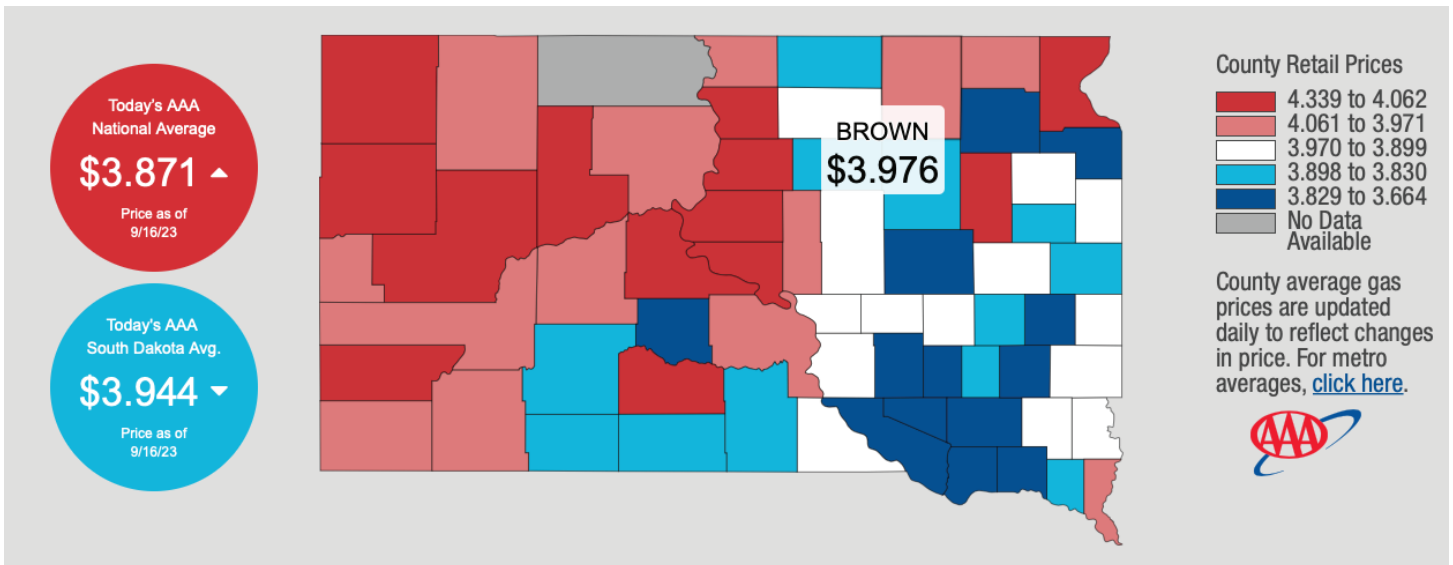
Broton Daily Independent

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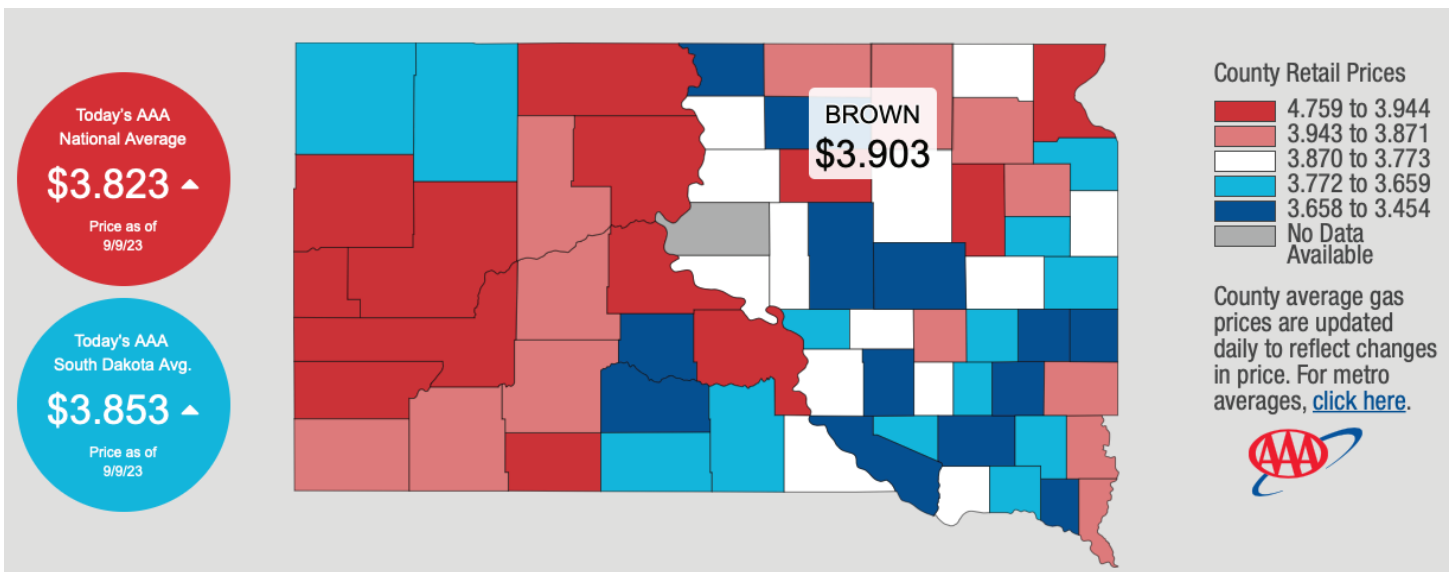
South Dakota Average Gas Prices

	Regular	Mid-Grade	Premium	Diesel
Current Avg.	\$3.944	\$4.101	\$4.580	\$4.351
Yesterday Avg.	\$3.957	\$4.116	\$4.578	\$4.332
Week Ago Avg.	\$3.853	\$3.980	\$4.478	\$4.260
Month Ago Avg.	\$3.811	\$3.962	\$4.412	\$4.121
Year Ago Avg.	\$3.677	\$3.834	\$4.290	\$4.804

This Week



Two Weeks Ago



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Northern Sends Minnesota Crookston Packing in Three Sets

Aberdeen, S.D. – A Friday sweep saw the Northern State University volleyball team notch their first NSIC victory of the 2023 season and eighth straight. The Wolves downed Minnesota Crookston with set scores of 25-14, 25-11, and 25-16.

THE QUICK DETAILS

Final Score: NSU 3, UMC 0

Records: NSU 8-1 (1-0 NSIC), UMC 2-7 (0-1 NSIC)

Attendance: 802

HOW IT HAPPENED

Northern was efficient in the win, hitting .327, as well as a match high .464 in the second set

They tallied just three attack errors apiece in the opening two sets and forced 5 apiece defensively

In total, the Northern defense held Minnesota Crookston to a .085 attack percentage, forcing 14 hitting errors and recording eight blocks

The Wolves added a match leading 47 kills, 42 assists, 56 digs, and seven aces

Morissen Samuels and Natalia Szybinska led the team with 12 and 10 kills respectively, as Szybinska hit a season high .474

Keri Walker averaged 12.33 assists per set in the win, while leading the team with four aces

Abby Meister continued to be a monster in the backrow, notching 21 total digs, and Victoria Persha led the team at the net with five blocks

NORTHERN STATE STATISTICAL STANDOUTS

Morissen Samuels: 12 kills, 5 digs, 2 blocks

Natalia Szybinska: 10 kills, .474 attack%

Abby Brooks: 8 kills, .462 attack%, 3 blocks

Keri Walker: 37 assists, 8 digs, 4 aces, 4 blocks

Abby Mesiter: 21 digs

Reese Johnson: 8 digs, 3 aces

Sara Moberg: 8 digs, 4 assists

UP NEXT

The Wolves return to Wachs Arena today for a 2 p.m. match against Bemidji State University. For full game promotions visit nsuwolves.com/promotions.

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Hamlin Invitational Volleyball Tournament

September 16, 2023

Hamlin Education Center- 44577 188th St- Hayti, SD

Pool A

Castlewood
Colman -Egan
Groton
Tiospa Zina

Pool B

Florence-Henry
Hamlin
James Valley Christian
Sisseton

Court 1-East Court

9:00 Castlewood vs Colman-Egan
10:15 Groton vs Tiospa Zina
11:30 Colman-Egan vs Tiospa Zina
12:45 Groton vs Castlewood
2:00 Castlewood vs Tiospa Zina
3:15 Colman-Egan vs Groton
4:30 7th/8th place match (Bottom two from each pool)
5:45 3rd/4th Place Match (2nd place from each pool)

Court 2- West Court

9:00 Hamlin vs James Valley Christian
10:15 Florence-Henry vs Sisseton
11:30 Hamlin vs Sisseton
12:45 James Valley Christian vs Florence-Henry
2:00 James Valley Christian vs Sisseton
3:15 Hamlin vs Florence-Henry
4:30 5th/6th Place Match (3rd place from each pool)
5:45 Championship Match (Pool play winners)

TIMES are approximate. WE WILL roll the schedule ahead if possible.

- Format:** All matches are best of three to 25 points (no cap). All necessary third games will be played to 25.(no cap)
- Warmups:** 15 minute warmup will be used prior to team's first match. 5 minute warmups will be used for subsequent matches. The multi-purpose gym will be available for warmups.
- Official Book:** The home team (first team listed) will be responsible to keep the official book.
If you are using a libero you will need to have a libero tracker.
Each team will need to provide a line judge. If we must provide a line judge it will be \$20/match.
- Tie Breakers:**
1. Match Record
 2. Head to Head Record
 3. Total Points allowed
 4. Coin Toss
- Awards:** Medals will be given to first place
- Entry Fee:** \$125 per team- please bring with you the day of the tournament or mail to Hamlin Education Center.
Make Checks payable to Hamlin Schools.....Attention Todd Neuendorf
- Officials:** Gene Bjorklund, Vonda Bjorklund, Beth Schutt, Brian Ries, Faith Leiseth, and Traci Bass
- Rosters:** Rosters will be taken from the SDHSAA website.
- Admission:** Adults \$5 Students \$3

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Times are approximate. They will be going with a rolling schedule
Times will be updated at GDILIVE.COM

GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers

Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023
10:15 a.m.
Tiospa Zina
at Hamlin



Varsity sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric

GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers

Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023
12:45 p.m.
Castlewood
at Hamlin



Varsity sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric

GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers

Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023
3:15 p.m.
Colman-Egan
at Hamlin



Varsity sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric

GDILIVE.COM

Groton Area
Tigers

Saturday, Sept. 16, 2023
4:30 or 5:45
Final
at Hamlin



Varsity sponsored by Bary Keith at Harr Motors, BK Custom Ts & More, Bierman Farm Service, Blocker Construction, Dacotah Bank, Full Circle Ag, Groton Ag Partners, Groton Chamber, Groton Ford, Harry Implement, John Sieh Agency and Locke Electric



SOUTH DAKOTA SEARCHLIGHT

<https://southdakotasearchlight.com>

Bridge generation: Children of southeast Asian refugees carve out niche in Huron

Younger Karen migrants, educated in U.S., aim to help others thrive

BY: JOHN HULT - FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 2:10 PM

HURON — Until age 6, Kler Hae roamed the highlands of southern Thailand after school with his friends, hunting birds with slingshots and stones. If they got lucky, they'd bring home dinner.

Now he's a real estate agent in Huron, an eastern South Dakota town of about 14,000.

At age 12, Pywe Der moved to the U.S. and started learning English. In 2016, he was crowned Huron High School's homecoming king.

Now he's a Huron police officer.

At 12, New New Win's mother gave their home and nearly everything in it to an uncle who wouldn't be able to join them in the U.S.

Now she's a community health worker for Huron Regional Medical Center.

At 16, Hezekiah Moo and his family had to duck Thai police on the rare occasions they'd venture out of their refugee camp. His parents made him read before school, after school, and again before bed, believing education was the clearest path to a brighter future.

Now he's a paraeducator with the Huron School District.

All four are members of the Karen (kuh-RIN) ethnic group, a people native to Myanmar (formerly Burma) whose members have fled the world's longest civil war for decades to create a global diaspora of nearly 2 million. Another 5 million Karen still live in Thailand or Myanmar.

Since 2006, nearly 3,000 have either moved to Huron for jobs, initially at a turkey processing plant, or have been born there to migrant parents.

The Karen were among the first in a continuing wave of migrants from southeast Asia, Mexico, and Central and South America that turned Huron into the state's most diverse city per capita outside of Indian Country.

Hae, Der and Moo are part of a bridge generation for Huron's Karen. They and others in their late teens and 20s spent their childhoods translating documents, medical instructions, contracts and even their own report cards for their parents.

Der is the second Karen-speaking officer hired by the Huron Police Department. Hae is the first Karen-speaking Realtor in South Dakota. Moo is one of nearly two dozen Karen paraeducators on the Huron School District payroll working with English language learners of all backgrounds across the school system.

Lah Soe, meanwhile, leads the Huron Karen Association and organizes an annual soccer tournament. It doubles as a three-day Karen culture festival that draws thousands from the global diaspora to the Pepsi Soccer Fields each July.

In addition to men's and women's soccer and volleyball – the top prize is \$15,000 – the 2023 event included a beauty pageant, fashion show and two nights of concerts.

Simon LerDee of Colorado was there to play volleyball, but also to connect with others who speak his language and share his culture.

"This is the biggest tournament of the year for the Karen community," LerDee said. "Everywhere you go, people say 'hi' and want to talk to you."

Hae and Der played soccer at the tournament; Moo live-streamed the shows and photographed the action.

The presence of white Huron residents at the festival, particularly younger people, was a sign that the city's transformation has moved beyond awkward beginnings and varying degrees of discomfort to a point of pride.

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"Our kids are paving the way for us as adults," said Huron School District Superintendent Kraig Steinhoff.

Beyond the factory

Dakota Provisions, whose management recruited the first Karen families to Huron for work in the turkey processing facility in 2006, is the largest employer in Beadle County, with around 1,000 employees.

Huron's Karen residents still make up a sizable chunk of its workforce, but the company's recruiting efforts shifted toward migrants from other southeast Asian nations in recent years.

Many of the children of that first set of refugee workers are less interested in the close quarters of a slaughterhouse. Some new Huronites have picked up trade skills and work for companies like Terex or Horizontal Machining and Manufacturing.

The pool of skilled foreign-born workers has helped the turkey plant, too.

"That's where we get our electricians," said Mark "Smoky" Heuston, a former recruiter for Dakota Provisions.

At Terex, just under half its Huron workers are minorities, the bulk of whom are Karen.

"About 25% of our workforce in Huron is Karen," Terex Vice President Eric Kluver said. "And it's growing. It's helped us quite a bit."

Other Karen have opted to open businesses, which include grocery stores and restaurants and recently, a body shop called Kaw Thoo Lei.

Laurie Shelton, head of the Huron Chamber of Commerce, estimates that around a third of the new local businesses opened over the past decade are owned by new Americans.

Some of Huron's Karen children have gone to college and returned to town with degrees. Huron Regional Medical Center has long employed Karen translators and now has community liaisons and health care aides with Karen heritage. Dakotaland Federal Credit Union keeps Karen employees on staff.

"The second generation is really stepping out into the community," Shelton said.

Win's job for the hospital is to step out into the community. The 24-year-old graduated from Huron High School in 2016, then attended Northern State University, where she majored in biology and psychology. After a few years working in human resources for Jack Link's, a jerky plant in Alpena, Win latched onto the opportunity to become a community health worker for the hospital. The grant-funded position opened up last fall, and she fit the job description for several reasons: she's outgoing, speaks Karen and cares deeply for the health of her community.

She earned a community health worker certification during her first months on the job, which the hospital calls "community liaison." She's one of two, the other being a former nurse from Puerto Rico who works with Spanish-speaking residents.

Win's work involves some translation, but mostly involves getting out into the community to help connect people to hospital service, encourage preventative health care like colonoscopies and mammograms, and stress the importance of a healthy diet.

One older Karen woman with diabetes started with a visit from Win to discuss nutrition. Shortly thereafter, Win took her shopping to find health foods to help keep her blood sugars in check.

Win also works to overcome ingrained beliefs, especially in some older residents, about the effectiveness of herbal or natural remedies or the notion that a visit to the hospital is a sure sign of impending death. There's no need to turn to traditional medicine for most ailments, Win will tell them.

"We live in the United States now," she'll tell them. "We have everything that we might need."

New careers, new focus

Officer Der is the second Karen-speaking officer to have joined the Huron Police Department. The first left town with a spouse who got a higher-paying job.

Factory work was never appealing for Der. He always wanted to be an officer, as his father was back in the camp in Thailand. Camps don't have certified officers with badges, bodycams and firearms certifications, but the elder Der served as a peacekeeper, working to break up ugly situations before Thai authorities got involved.

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"If there were troublemakers or if people were drunk and fighting, they would have him come and get involved," Der said. "It was a lot like what I do now, actually."

Der headed to the Law Enforcement Academy in Pierre on the third week in August to work toward his officer certification, but he's been patrolling for months. He speaks English to anyone who can, and Karen to those who don't or prefer their native tongue.

His work is grounded in concern for public safety, but also for his people. He remembers his father getting into an accident early on in their time in Huron. It was a minor fender-bender, but no one was around to translate. His father wasn't sure what he was legally obliged to do, and knew even less about what to say to the other driver.

A lot of new Americans need help wrapping their arms around the laws and expectations of their adopted country, Der said.

"They don't want to break the law, but they don't know it," Der said. "They don't understand it at all."

Moo, the paraeducator, knows he could make more money at the turkey plant than he does at the school. But he enjoys working with people, likes his summers off and prefers a work environment whose climate is controlled for the comfort of humans, not the safety of turkey meat.

"I don't like the cold," said Moo. "I don't think I could work in the factory."

The 29-year-old is the breadwinner for his family, a role he took on in the U.S., where he's purchased a house for himself, his mother and his sister. Moo's father died from diabetes complications and high blood pressure in 2010, just months before the family left Thailand and more than a year after applying for visas.

"He was the one who wanted us to come to the U.S.," said Moo.

After high school, Moo got an associate's degree through Huron Community Campus, a remote learning site on the grounds of an old college. After a few months at a clinic, he signed on to help high school students who are just learning English tackle their coursework.

Moo doesn't speak Spanish, but he's picked up a bit. Otherwise he relies on student translators and Google Translate.

Helping students at the school where he began to learn English as a 16-year-old freshman is gratifying, he said.

"I'm a person who's always been very curious about other people and their languages," said Moo, who was the district's paraeducator employee of the year in 2021. "I want to learn about their languages."

Win enjoys her work for the hospital. She likes working with people in general, and especially enjoys helping her community. But even if she wanted to work at Dakota Provisions, she wouldn't do it.

"My mom, my whole family is working hard for us to have a better opportunity," Win said. "To see their kid work in a factory, that would break their heart."

Hae has similar motivations. As a real estate agent, he can help make sure Karen children don't have to guide their parents through mortgage contracts.

"I've been trying to translate government papers since I was 9 or 10 years old," Hae said. "I don't think that's fair to a lot of kids. That's hard. Even today, for me, explaining the contract and translating it from English to Karen is difficult. I just thought there should be someone working in that field, instead of having kids do it for them."

Hae remembers coming from San Antonio to Huron on a bus, about six months after his family landed in the U.S. It was the middle of winter, and he'd never seen snow.

Initially, he was mystified at the sight of it.

"Now I hate it," he said.

There's plenty he does enjoy in Huron, of course, including his work. Hae did a job shadow day with a real estate agent in high school. The experience helped him realize that the career offered him a chance to satisfy another prime motivator: his competitive instinct.

"Being a Realtor, the sky's the limit," Hae said. "The harder you work, the more you get paid, so it's very competitive. I've always liked competing in sports and stuff like that, so that really drives me."

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Huron as a hub

Hae and Der still compete on the soccer field. When he's not selling homes or toiling as a landscaper at his second job, Hae works as an assistant soccer coach at Huron High School. During this year's Karen soccer tournament, Der and Hae both competed for the \$15,000 top prize as members of the Huron Thunder (they didn't win).

The swell of southeast Asians at the soccer tournament is a reminder that Huron is far from the only city to have been adopted by Karen refugees. The largest concentration of Karen in the U.S. is centered around the Twin Cities, where nearly 20,000 Karen have settled, but the diaspora is wide.

At the 2023 event, the question "where are you from?" was met with answers including Norway, Sweden, Great Britain, as well as the U.S. states of Minnesota, Nebraska, Iowa, Texas, Colorado, New York, Arkansas, Missouri and, occasionally, Thailand.

That's exactly the kind of gathering envisioned by the tournament's late founder, Paw Sae, according to Der, the Huron police officer. The tournament is officially called the Paw Sae Memorial Soccer Tournament.

"He was the face of the Karen people, there and here," Der said. "He wanted all the Karen people to at least once a year to all come together and see each other, check in on how everyone is doing."

Like Der, many of those in attendance in 2023 came to their adopted homes at a young age, learning English and translating for their older relatives. Some have taken up the causes of Karen independence and humanitarian aid.

A Karen social media influencer who lives in Norway who goes by Wah Fish Paste runs a nonprofit organization called "I Am Knyaw," a reference to the Karen word for his people. Proceeds from the sale of T-shirts, hoodies and other items goes to support the families left behind in the camps.

Two teenage collaborators from Minneapolis and Omaha, Ka La Moo and April Htoo, were on hand to sell their clothing, purses and other Karen-centric items, as well. The "I Am Knyaw" clothing often includes the year 1949, the year the Karen insurgents launched their campaign against Burma.

The gathering was a unique opportunity for another young Karen man, the rapper Star2 of San Diego. He raps in English, and most of his songs aren't directly about the Karen experience, which made his performance to an expo building on the state fairgrounds packed with southeast Asians special.

"Most of my fans don't even know I'm Asian," he said.

The rapper arrived at the Pepsi Soccer Fields that afternoon with a social media manager in tow, documenting his interactions with a professional-grade camera.

While most of the visitors had kind words for Huron as a welcoming place, Hae feels like the generation after his could be drawn to places like San Diego or other urban locales, like the children and grandchildren of some earlier South Dakota immigrants.

For now, at least, he's glad to call Huron home. He and his friends are busy working to make it their own.

"I think a lot of the younger generation, they'll go to college, they'll get jobs and they'll want to make it – eventually," Hae said. "Eventually. Right now, you know, it's still just graduate and work. A lot of my friends work at Terex or Dakota Provisions or Jack Link's, but eventually, I think the younger generation will move to cities."

Win agrees, at least partially. She's not sure how the next generation will view the city of 14,000 in a country with so much opportunity in so many places. With her hard-won language skills, a college degree and a certification in the high-need field of community health work, Win could punch her own ticket to a life just about anywhere in the U.S.

But she's not interested.

"Huron is home for me," Win said. "This is my community. I want to settle down and raise a family here."

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Desperation and renewal: How Huron embraced new Americans and thrived

Karen refugees from Southeast Asia helped forge a path forward after loss of major employers

BY: JOHN HULT - FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 2:10 PM

That Huron came to be a major hub of Karen culture in the Midwest was at least partially a side effect of desperation.

What began as desperation for workers morphed into desperation for a school system struggling to manage its migrant population and the community's response to it.

Today, about a decade after the dust settled on its unique plan to manage those issues, the city of 14,000 has seen its Karen population thrive. City leaders say that's been a boon for the community at large.

Refugees from the Karen ethnic group, originally from Myanmar (formerly Burma), began moving to Huron in 2006, initially to work at a turkey plant in Beadle County. Unlike some migrant populations, many in the Karen community have embraced the city as a permanent home.

In addition to their work for area factories, the new Americans have opened three churches of their own and bolstered the membership of another. Some in the younger generation have begun working in a professional capacity for the school district, the city's health care system and in real estate. Other Karen residents have launched businesses or embraced higher education.

It's a present the city's recent past couldn't have predicted.

Economic losses

The path from a typical South Dakota city to the state's most diverse began with a run of bad luck, took shape through happenstance, and solidified with bold moves pitched by the Huron School District and backed by voters.

The city found itself in a downward spiral at the end of the 20th century. Three major employers closed or relocated operations in less than five years: the Dakota Pork plant and a university were shuttered, and NorthWestern Energy moved its headquarters out of town.

Huron – home of the South Dakota State Fair and once a candidate for state capital – was losing population quickly. Many parents of high schoolers opted to stick around until their kids graduated, but kindergarten class sizes had fallen off a cliff.

Developments that would change the city's fate took shape shortly after the one-two-three punch of economic loss. Forty-four colonies of Hutterites – members of a communal branch of the Anabaptist faith – banded together in 2002 to invest in the turkey processing facility that would become Dakota Provisions. The first turkey was slaughtered in December 2005. Wisconsin-based Jack Link's beef jerky had opened a plant in Alpena, about 20 miles south of Huron, a few years earlier.

Hispanic workers had come to town in the waning days of Dakota Pork. Some stayed, but many left when the plant closed. Jack Link's began to draw workers back in the early 2000s. But it was Dakota Provisions that would lay the groundwork for the city's diversity-driven comeback from the economic brink.

Recruiting Karen

Mark "Smoky" Heuston returned to his hometown from Wisconsin to recruit the workforce it would take to get the turkey plant up and running.

Heuston hopped over to the Twin Cities to recruit workers from the Hmong ethnic group, though the first Hmong he'd hired hadn't thrived in Huron. Most came to the Twin Cities from other urban areas, and Huron's pace of life didn't fit. Even so, he had a job to do and took to interviewing potential recruits at a cultural center in Minneapolis.

At some point, he took a break and wandered by a room with about 40 people in it.

He'd later learn it was an English class for Karen refugees. When he asked his guide about it, he was told the people in the room were new arrivals and couldn't speak English.

Heuston didn't care about that. He cared about the chance to make his pitch to 40 people at once.

"I told them that if they came to work for me, they didn't have to speak English," Heuston recalled.

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Heuston chartered a tour bus in 2005.

It was a fateful trip. The first Karen arrived in Huron the following year. Unlike the Hmong, most Karen hadn't lived in heavily populated areas. Those first recruits were Christian, and had moved to the home of the world's largest pheasant (a statue near a motel) with an affinity for hunting and fishing not dissimilar to that of Huron's white population.

To Heuston, this meant at least two things: first, that Huron could offer the Karen a peaceful home to call their own, and second, that he needn't worry about the city disappointing the recruits for its lack of urban amenities.

Seventeen years later, Heuston is convinced that the Karen and the Fair City have proven a good fit.

"You ask someone from Guatemala where they're from, and they'll tell you 'Guatemala,'" Heuston said. "You ask a Karen where they're from, and they'll tell you 'America.'"

Keeping kids together

None of that is to say that the demographic shift in Huron came without challenges.

Karen refugees and their children faced discrimination and misunderstanding early on.

But by 2016, Huron High School had chosen a homecoming king of Karen heritage. It wouldn't be the last time. The school royalty now regularly includes students of multiple ethnicities.

Though much credit for that level of integration and acceptance goes to the outgoing personalities of the elected royalty, there's an element of social engineering involved, as well.

Kids in Huron's most recent graduating classes have known one another since grade school, as all students in the district stay in the same building from kindergarten onward.

That setup was born of necessity, much like Heuston's recruitment road trips. As the children of new Americans began to fill classrooms, white families open-enrolled to a handful of elementary schools and schools in nearby towns like Iroquois.

Some kindergarten classes had nine or 10 kids. Others had as many as 35.

"It wasn't fair to the 35, and it wasn't fair to the nine," said Terry Nebelsick, who was superintendent for the Huron School District until 2021.

Nebelsick was the most recognizable public face of a campaign to address the issue. It involved a bond issue, buses, and a realignment of classes that would upend decades of tradition.

Instead of seven elementary schools for children in grades 1-5, Huron would consolidate young students into three buildings: one for kindergarteners and first-graders, another for grades two and three, and a third for grades four and five.

The plan came with expanded bus routes and a promise that no student would walk farther to get to school or a bus than they had before the vote. The efficiencies of a three-building system would cover the cost of the bussing, but the plan still had a \$22 million price tag.

The bond issue needed a two-thirds majority when it hit the ballot in 2013. It passed with 72%.

Success came through outreach to parents, schools and business leaders, Nebelsick said, but also because the community recognized that the status quo was unsustainable.

"We just had no choice," he said.

Four years later, the district became a majority-minority district. At the start of the 2022 school year, white students outnumbered Hispanic students by less than 300, with Asian students representing the third-largest ethnicity in the district.

Growth continues

On the sporting side, Huron has become a powerhouse competitor in volleyball, tennis and soccer – sports favored by its minority students.

The walls of the Huron Arena, where Steinhoff's office is located, are covered with photos of Huron High School teams, many of which have earned accolades in recent years.

"One of the things I'm most proud of is that last year, the boys' tennis team won the Sportsmanship Award for the third year in a row," said Kraig Steinhoff, the current superintendent of the Huron School District. "That's not something that happens regularly, where schools get a Sportsmanship Award over

and over again.”

In some ways, Steinhoff said, the award is reflective of an attitude he’s noticed in migrants and their children since taking the job two years ago.

“The families that come over here are very appreciative of what they have, with a home and a car, being safe, and having a job,” he said. “They’re attending churches, doing things together as families and loving life. They don’t have any entitlement in them at all. It makes me feel as though that’s what my family was like when they first came over. Now I’m several generations away, and I feel entitled.”

It’s a view shared by Nebelsick, who’s lived next door to a Karen family for more than a decade. The retired former superintendent, who still drives one of the district’s 24 bus routes on occasion, said keeping the kids together from grade school served several purposes beyond the immediate ones that bubbled up in the early 2010s. It helped to melt away cultural barriers in classrooms, tennis courts and fields, but educators in Huron see longer-term impacts.

“Our kids are better equipped to live in a diverse world than kids just about anywhere in the state,” Nebelsick said. “There are patches of Sioux Falls that are the same, but our families value that. Our kids were able to come back and reinforce that. We were able to adapt and prosper much more quickly because we didn’t see the obstacles of color.”

John is the senior reporter for South Dakota Searchlight. He has more than 15 years experience covering criminal justice, the environment and public affairs in South Dakota, including more than a decade at the Sioux Falls Argus Leader.

Carbon pipeline company has not ‘taken any state off the map’ after SD permit rejection

But Navigator CO2 pulls back on some operations while awaiting written decision

BY: JOSHUA HAIAR AND JARED STRONG - SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 2:00 PM

A recently failed permit application is not necessarily the end of a carbon capture pipeline company’s goal of building in South Dakota and four other states, according to a company spokesperson.

“We have not taken any state off the map,” Elizabeth Burns-Thompson, of Navigator CO2, told South Dakota Searchlight in an interview Friday.

The South Dakota Public Utilities Commission unanimously voted Sept. 6 to deny Navigator’s application for a construction permit.

Since then, Burns-Thompson said, the Omaha, Nebraska-based company has released contracted land agents and walked back some business operations “in the South Dakota footprint.” The company is re-locating resources elsewhere, at least until it sees the written permit-denial order from the commission, which is due by Sept. 26.

“It’s important for us to see that in black and white,” Burns-Thompson said, adding she could not say what a new approach in South Dakota would look like “until we see that legal opinion.”

Burns-Thompson said speculation that Navigator is giving up on the South Dakota portion of its project is based on text messages between some landowners and recently released contractors who are not company employees.

“No letters or messages indicating a withdrawal from South Dakota were sent on behalf of Navigator,” she said.

A northwest Iowa landowner reported receiving such a message.

Amy Solsma, whose land is in the path of Navigator’s project, is among those whose easement negotiations have been suspended. A land agent contracted by Navigator told her the “project is getting shut down permanently,” according to a text message exchange.

“It’s a small win because, trust me, I don’t believe anything they ever do,” Solsma said.

Her farm in O’Brien County lies near the start of the pipeline’s potential link to South Dakota from Iowa. There’s a pipeline junction just to the east of the farm where it would branch to ethanol plants in Iowa,

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Minnesota and Nebraska. Solsma said one of her neighbors received a similar message about the project.

State regulators in Iowa are set to consider a schedule for Navigator's permit request next month. It's unclear when a final evidentiary hearing will be set, but the company seeks a decision on its permit request by next fall.

Navigator applied for its South Dakota permit in September 2022, outlining plans for a \$3 billion, 1,300-mile pipeline to transport carbon dioxide in liquid form from 21 ethanol and fertilizer plants across five states to an underground sequestration site in Illinois. In eastern South Dakota, the project would cover 111.9 miles in Brookings, Moody, Minnehaha, Lincoln and Turner counties.

Part of the project's attraction is its eligibility for annual federal tax credits of \$85 per metric ton of sequestered carbon. The federal government offers the credit as an incentive to remove heat-trapping carbon dioxide from the atmosphere and sequester it, as a means of combating climate change. Carbon dioxide is emitted by ethanol plants as part of the process of converting corn into the fuel additive.

Another company proposing a similar project, Summit Carbon Solutions, also suffered recent rejections of its permit applications in North Dakota and South Dakota. Summit's permit hearings in Iowa are ongoing.

Summit has already sought reconsideration in North Dakota and has announced it plans to refine its proposal and reapply in South Dakota.

Joshua Haiar is a reporter based in Sioux Falls. Born and raised in Mitchell, he joined the Navy as a public affairs specialist after high school and then earned a degree from the University of South Dakota. Prior to joining South Dakota Searchlight, Joshua worked for five years as a multimedia specialist and journalist with South Dakota Public Broadcasting.

Jared Strong is the senior reporter for the Iowa Capital Dispatch. He has written about Iowans and the important issues that affect them for more than 15 years, previously for the Carroll Times Herald and the Des Moines Register. His investigative work exposing police misconduct has notched several state and national awards. He is a longtime trustee of the Iowa Freedom of Information Council, which fights for open records and open government. He is a lifelong Iowan and has lived mostly in rural western parts of the state.

Rapid City nonprofit receives gun violence prevention grant

BY: MAKENZIE HUBER - SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 12:47 PM

A Native American-led nonprofit in Rapid City has been awarded a grant from the Everytown Community Safety Fund to prevent gun violence in the city.

Wambli Ska Okolakiciye, which started in 2014, received \$50,000 in funding to "better position them to access federal funding" to reduce gun violence and raise awareness about missing and murdered Indigenous women, according to a news release from Everytown for Gun Safety.

The grant is part of the national organization's \$2.35 million Everytown Community Safety Fund investment into 335 community-based violence intervention organizations across the United States. Wambli Ska will also have access to training, conferences and support from Everytown.

Wambli Ska's work includes a street outreach team, "Oyate Court" for juvenile and young adult diversion from the criminal justice system, an emergency shelter, and a teen center to address violence in the city's population through youth diversion and community initiatives.

The grant will be used to help implement a comprehensive community-based violence intervention (CVI) program, said Chris White Eagle, executive director of Wambli Ska, in a news release.

"While historic investments have been made at all levels of government," the news release said, "CVI organizations still struggle to access promised funding and when they do, funding is restricted to programmatic expenses, preventing them from increasing staff, building their capacity or scaling to more people and places in need."

Makenzie Huber is a lifelong South Dakotan whose work has won national and regional awards. She's spent five years as a journalist with experience reporting on workforce, development and business issues within the state.

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On Democracy Day, newsrooms unite for pro-democracy coverage

BY: ZACHARY ROTH - SEPTEMBER 15, 2023 11:52 AM

It's no secret: U.S. democracy is under serious threat.

Politicians use rigged maps to entrench themselves in power, allowing them to ignore the will of voters. Hundreds of members of Congress, state lawmakers, and top state officials — including chief elections officials — deny the results of the last presidential contest. And a leading candidate for 2024 talks openly about abusing the power of the federal government to retaliate against his political opponents.

"No longer can we take for granted that people will accept election results as legitimate," warned a recent report by the Safeguarding Democracy Project, a committee of election experts convened by the University of California, Los Angeles School of Law. "The United States faces continued threats to peaceful transitions of power after election authorities (or courts) have declared a presidential election winner."

No surprise, then, that more than 8 in 10 respondents to a recent poll said they were worried about the state of American democracy, with 1 in 4 saying they're very worried.

But much of the media is failing to convey the danger.

At the first Republican presidential debate last month, not a single question was asked about democracy.

Even when the subject is given attention, it's often treated in the same way journalists cover fights over more traditional issues like taxes, health care, or education: Reporters quote both sides — those looking to restrict democracy, and those working to protect it — assess the political implications, and perhaps lament our growing "polarization".

A growing number of newsrooms are recognizing that this approach doesn't meet the moment. Democracy is different from those other issues, because it underlies all of them. Without a healthy democracy, voters can't make collective decisions that have legitimacy, no matter the issue. Nor can Americans count on having a free press to cover the debate.

That's why a drive is underway to help bolster the foundations of our system through "pro-democracy" coverage. On Friday, States Newsroom is joining 135 news organizations for Democracy Day 2023, a nationwide pro-democracy reporting collaborative, launched last year, that's organized by Montclair State University's Center for Cooperative Media in New Jersey and the Institute for Nonprofit News.

The pro-democracy coverage that participating newsrooms will produce can take a range of forms. It might be journalism that shines a light on the most urgent threats to democracy and holds anti-democratic actors accountable.

But it also can be journalism that gives citizens the tools they need to participate in the process; or that explains how local government works and helps people access needed services; or that uplifts the ordinary Americans working to protect and strengthen democracy.

"It doesn't have to be negative and only focus on the threats," said Beatrice Forman, a reporter with the Philadelphia Inquirer and Democracy Day's project coordinator. "Pro-democracy journalism can also focus on solutions to those threats: Who are the people on the ground doing things to enfranchise people and to make people feel comfortable exercising their civic rights?"

Here are just a few of the stories that States Newsroom's 36 outlets have produced for Democracy Day:

South Dakota Searchlight is examining the slow adoption rate of vote centers and electronic poll books, which were envisioned about a decade ago as voter-convenience changes that were the "future" of voting in the state; additionally, Searchlight is publishing a commentary from columnist Dana Hess about closed-door meetings of public officials.

The Alabama Reflector is digging into a voting conundrum: Why is the state's turnout rate sliding — it averaged just under 50% in the last two national elections — even as the number of Alabamians on the voter rolls has increased?

The Kansas Reflector is asking how campaigns and election officials can ensure young voters stay engaged. They turned out in high numbers for an August referendum on abortion rights, the Reflector notes, but many then stayed home in November.

The Michigan Advance looks at the impact of the state's major voting rights expansion since 2018, which

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has included same-day voter registration, no-excuse mail voting and more. Advocates of expanded access to the ballot say they aren't finished yet.

The Nebraska Examiner is showing readers how their government works, breaking down the functions of the state's executive branch and spotlighting the decision-makers running key departments.

NC Newslite is helping North Carolinians exercise their democratic rights, by explaining how to ensure the voting experience goes smoothly now that the state's voter ID law is in effect.

And the Pennsylvania Capital-Star is highlighting how the state's closed primary system — in which only registered Democrats and Republicans can vote — leaves out over 1 million registered voters. What could be more democratic, Capital-Star Editor Kim Lyons asks, than opening the process of choosing candidates to more people?

It may be only one day. But Democracy Day aims to kick-start a more permanent shift in approach.

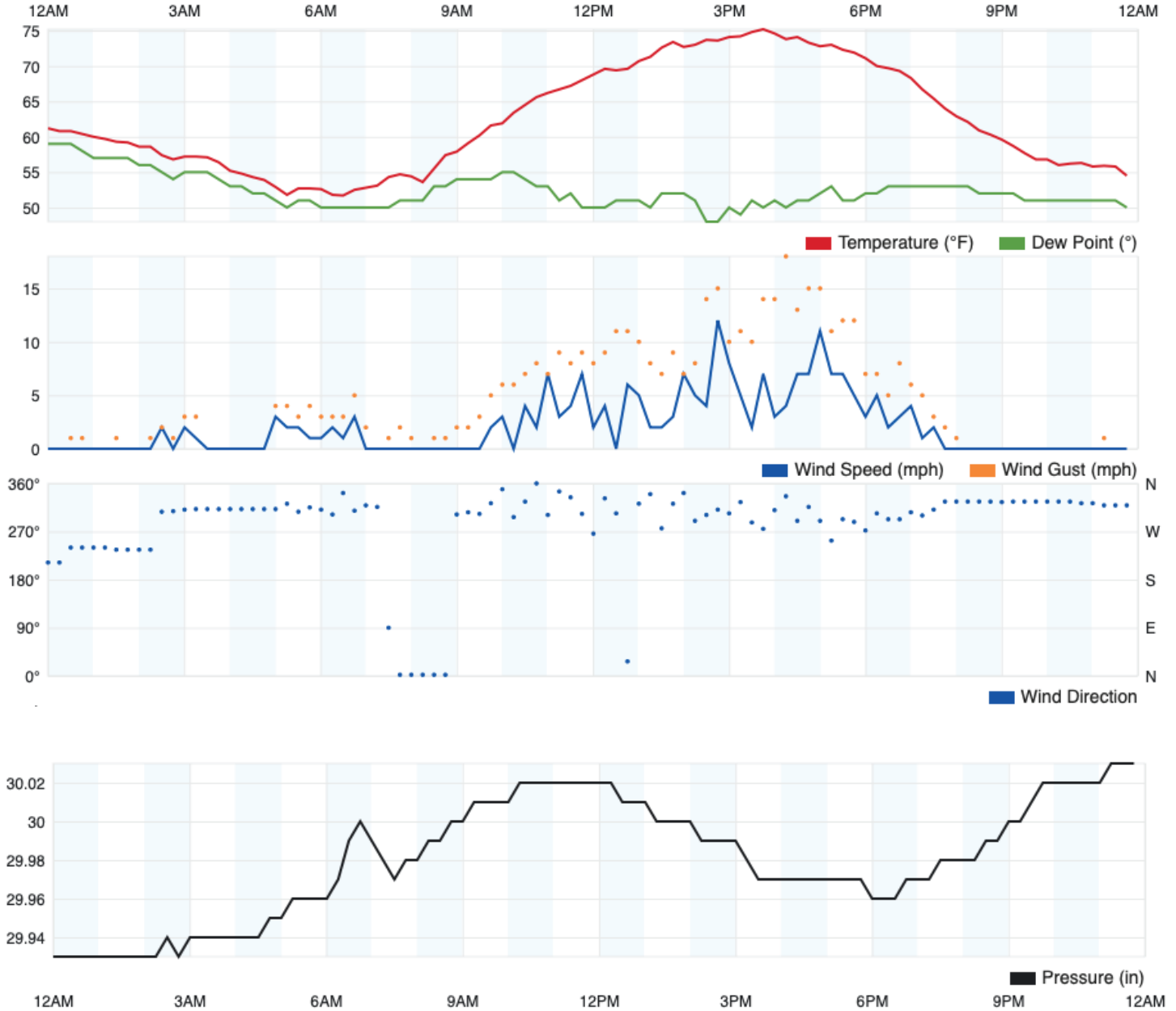
The goal, said Forman, "is to really catalyze an industry-wide transformation towards content that doesn't treat politics like a game, doesn't cater to political insiders, (but instead) caters to actual people wanting to know more about how their government works."

Zachary Roth is the National Democracy Reporter for States Newsroom.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather Graphs



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Today	Tonight	Sunday	Sunday Night	Monday	Monday Night	Tuesday
Areas Smoke then Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Mostly Clear	Sunny	Partly Cloudy	Sunny
High: 69 °F	Low: 42 °F	High: 72 °F	Low: 49 °F	High: 80 °F	Low: 51 °F	High: 86 °F



Mild This Weekend...Warmer Early Next Week

Hazy sky at times from Canadian wildfire smoke today.

• weather.gov/abr •

Maximum Temperature Forecast

	9/16	9/17	9/18	9/19	9/20	9/21
	Sat	Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu
Aberdeen	71	73	81	87	80	76
Britton	66	70	79	85	78	73
Brookings	70	71	80	84	81	75
Chamberlain	78	78	86	89	84	79
Clark	70	71	79	85	81	75
Eagle Butte	73	77	85	83	75	70
Ellendale	67	71	79	85	76	73
Eureka	69	72	79	83	74	71
Gettysburg	72	75	84	85	78	73
Huron	74	76	85	89	84	75
Kennebec	76	78	86	90	83	77
McIntosh	69	75	84	78	71	67
Milbank	69	71	80	87	83	77
Miller	72	75	82	87	81	75
Mobridge	72	76	84	83	76	73
Murdo	76	82	87	88	80	75
Pierre	78	82	89	90	84	77
Redfield	72	73	81	87	81	77
Sisseton	66	70	79	85	80	75
Watertown	69	72	80	87	83	77
Webster	66	68	76	83	78	72
Wheaton	66	71	79	85	81	75

*Table values in °F
 **Created: 3 am CDT Sat 9/16/2023
 ***Values are maximums over the period beginning at the time shown.

Dry and mild conditions can be expected this weekend. Look for the early part of next week to be warmer, with temperatures around 10 degrees above normal for this time of year.

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Yesterday's Groton Weather

High Temp: 75 °F at 3:37 PM

Low Temp: 52 °F at 6:21 AM

Wind: 18 mph at 4:13 PM

Precip: : 0.00

Day length: 21 hours, 33 minutes

Today's Info

Record High: 96 in 1925

Record Low: 20 in 1916

Average High: 75

Average Low: 47

Average Precip in Sept.: 1.08

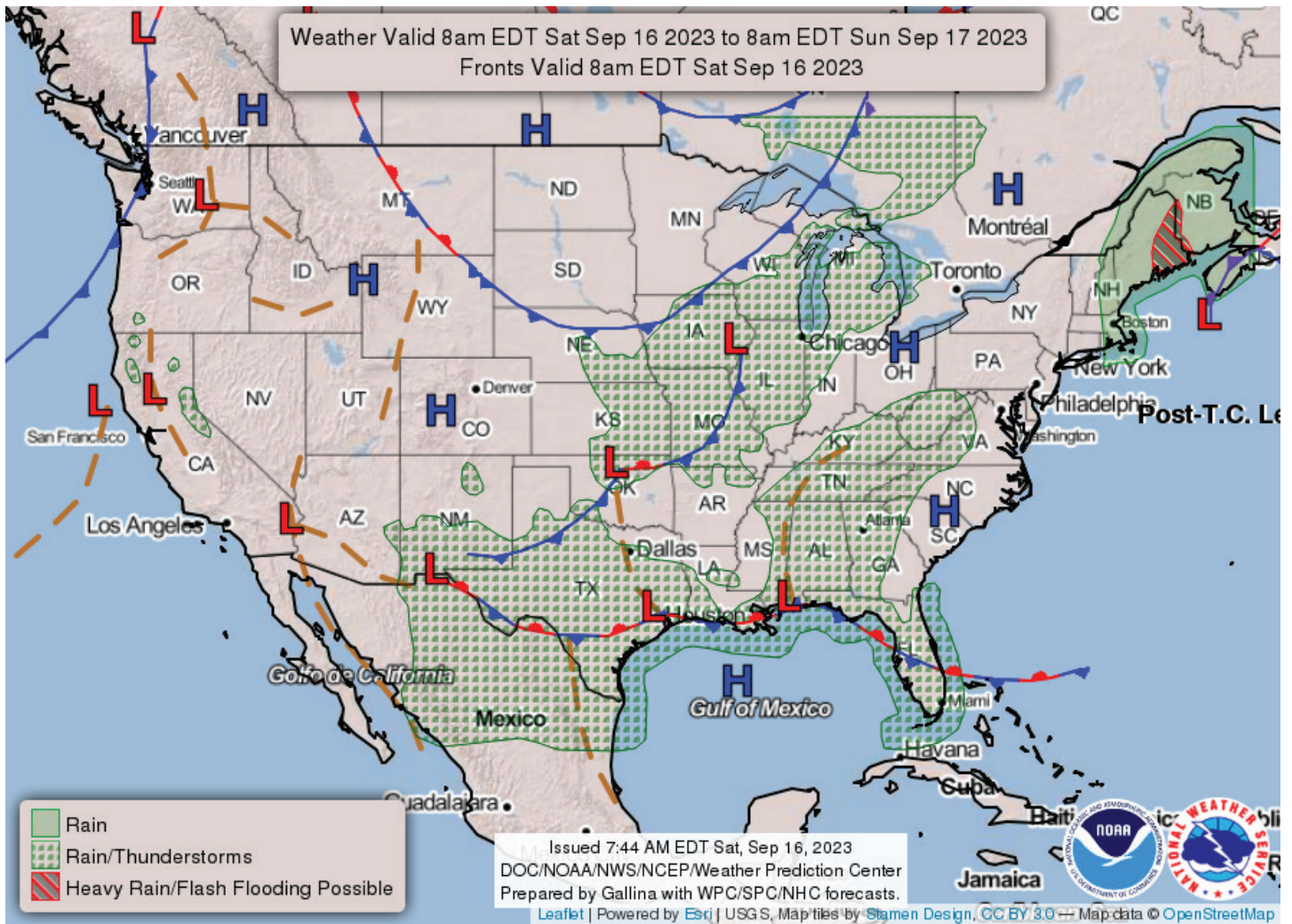
Precip to date in Sept.: 0.57

Average Precip to date: 17.42

Precip Year to Date: 19.16

Sunset Tonight: 7:43:46 PM

Sunrise Tomorrow: 7:11:55 AM



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Today in Weather History

September 16, 1965: A heavy snow event brought widespread snowfall across the region with snowfall accumulations of 1 inch in Colony and Devils Tower, 2.6 inches at the Rapid City Airport, 4 inches in Oelrichs, 5.1 inches in Redig, and 8 inches in Lead, Spearfish, and Sundance.

September 16, 2006: Two weak tornadoes touched down briefly west and north of Clark in the late afternoon. No damage occurred.

1881: Iowa's earliest measurable snow of record fell over western sections of the state. Four to six inches was reported between Stuart and Avoca.

1888: An estimated F2 tornado struck Washington, DC. The tornado first touched down on the south side of the city then moved up Maryland Avenue. The National Museum and Botanical Gardens were damaged before the tornado lifted off the ground.

1928: The Okeechobee Hurricane, also known as the San Felipe Segundo Hurricane was one of the deadliest hurricanes in the history of the Atlantic basin. This Hurricane made landfall near West Palm Beach, Florida as a Category 4 storm during the evening hours of the 16th. The storm surge caused water to pour out of the southern edge of Lake Okeechobee, flooding hundreds of square miles as high as 20 feet. This storm killed over 4,000 people, including 2,500 in Florida.

1961: On September 16, 1961, Hurricane Esther was seeded by Navy planes in the inaugural experiment of what was to formally become Project STORMFURY next year. Esther was the first hurricane to be initially detected by satellite. On Sept. 10th, TIROS III imaged an area of disturbed weather a hundred miles southwest of the Cabo Verde Islands.

1984 - The remains of Tropical Storm Edourd began to produce torrential rains in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas. Port Isabel reported more than 21 inches. (The Weather Channel)

1987 - Overnight rains soaked Arkansas, with 5.25 inches reported at Bismarck. In the town of Malvern, up to four feet of water was reported over several downtown streets, with water entering some homes and businesses. Thunderstorms in Texas drenched Lufkin with 4.30 inches of rain in just three hours. Evening thunderstorms produced severe weather in Missouri. A small tornado near Kirksville lifted a barn thirty feet into the air and then demolished it. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1988 - Hurricane Gilbert moved ashore into Mexico. The hurricane established an all-time record for the western hemisphere with a barometric reading of 26.13 inches. Winds approached 200 mph, with higher gusts. Gilbert devastated Jamaica and the Yucatan Peninsula. (The Weather Channel) Hurricane Gilbert made landfall 120 miles south of Brownsville TX during the early evening. Winds gusted to 61 mph at Brownsville, and reached 82 mph at Padre Island. Six foot tides eroded three to four feet off beaches along the Lower Texas Coast, leaving the waterline seventy-five feet farther inland. Rainfall totals ranged up to 8.71 inches at Lamar TX. Gilbert caused three million dollars damage along the Lower Texas Coast, but less than a million dollars damage along the Middle Texas Coast. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

1989 - Showers and thunderstorms, representing what remained of Hurricane Octave, brought locally heavy rains to California, impeding the drying process for raisins and other crops. Sacramento CA was soaked with 1.53 inches of rain in six hours. At Phoenix AZ, the afternoon high of 107 degrees marked a record seventy-six days with afternoon highs 105 degrees or above. (The National Weather Summary) (Storm Data)

2004: Hurricane Ivan turned northward over cooler waters, and made landfall in southern Alabama on September 16 as a Category 3 storm. Hurricane Ivan had a very unusual track almost making a huge circle.

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Daily Devotionals

Seeds of Hope

WHAT COUNTS

In the game of baseball, victory is determined by runs. It is not determined by strikes or strike-outs, hits, double plays, triple plays or the number of innings a game may go. It is only determined by runs.

The player who hits the ball into left field for a single and even stretches it into a double and slides safely into second is not rewarded with "half-a-run." It is not part of the final score.

How true of life. How true of everything we do. It is not how well we start, how well we continue for a while, but whether or not we finish what we started.

Paul had a co-worker named Demas. How long he was involved with Paul or whether or not he had any particular skills in church planting is not known. What is known is that he deserted Paul because he loved the things of "this life." He allowed his desire for worldly things and pleasures to surpass his desire for the things of the Lord.

There are two ways we might view the world. One is the way God intended it to be and the way it will be when He returns in His glory. The other way we might look at the world is as Demas did - as it is now with its evil attractions and sinful pleasures.

All of us have the same choices as Demas and Paul: to live for the things of this world or the world to come. Life is a choice. Choose wisely.

Prayer: Create within us, Lord, the desire to seek first the Kingdom of God and a life of righteousness. May we honor You in all we do and forsake the world. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

Scripture For Today: Demas has deserted me because he loves the things of this life and has gone to Thessalonica. 2 Timothy 4:10



We all need the encouragement, comfort, and peace that comes through God's grace. Our daily devotionals, known as Seeds of Hope, have been a means through which thousands of people have experienced this grace. Each devotional comes from God's Word and we pray this good "seed" finds good soil in your heart. Our aim is that the Seeds of Hope will be a great source of daily encouragement to you and that God will use them to draw you near to Him

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2023 Community Events

- 01/29/2023 Groton Robotics Pancake Feed, 10am-1pm, Community Center
- 01/29/2023 85th Carnival of Silver Skates 2pm & 6:30pm (Last Sunday of January)
- 01/31/2023-02/03/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Drop Off 6-9pm, Community Center
- 02/04/2023-02/05/2023 Lion's Club Prom & Formal Dress Consignment Sale 1-5pm, Community Center
- 02/25/2023 Littles and Me, Art Making 10-11:30am, Wage Memorial Library
- 03/25/2023 Spring Vendor Fair, 10am-3pm, Community Center
- 04/01/2023 Dueling Duo Baseball/Softball Fundraiser at the Legion Post #39 6-11:30pm
- 04/06/2023 Groton Career Development Event
- 04/08/2023 Lion's Club Easter Egg Hunt 10am Sharp at the City Park (Saturday a week before Easter)
- 04/22/2023 Firemen's Spring Social at the Fire Station 7pm-12:30am (Same Saturday as GHS Prom)
- 04/23/2023 Princess Prom 4:30-8pm (Sunday after GHS Prom)
- 05/06/2023 Lion's Club Spring Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm (1st Saturday in May)
- 05/29/2023 Legion Post #39 Memorial Day Services (Memorial Day)
- 06/16/2023 SDSU Alumni and Friends Golf Tournament
- 06/17/2023 Groton Triathlon
- 07/04/2023 Couples Firecracker Golf Tournament
- 07/09/2023 Lion's Club Summer Fest/Car Show at the City Park 9am-4pm (Sunday Mid-July)
- 07/26/2023 GGA Burger Fundraiser Lunch at Olive Grove Golf Course
- 08/04/2023 Wine on Nine 6pm
- 08/10/2023 Family Fun Fest, 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.
- 08/11/2023 GHS Basketball Golf Tournament
- 09/08/2023 Family Fun Fest 3:30-5:30pm
- 09/09/2023 Lion's Club Fall Citywide Rummage Sale 8am-3pm
- 09/09-10/2023 Groton Airport Fly-In/Drive-In, Groton Municipal Airport
- 09/10/2023 Couples Sunflower Tourney at Olive Grove Golf Course 10am
- 09/10/2023 Emmanuel Lutheran Church Sunday School Rally 9:00am
- 09/10/2023 7th Annual Doggie Day at the Swimming Pool 4-6pm
- 09/15/2023 Homecoming Parade
- 10/13/2023 Lake Region Marching Band Festival 10am
- 10/14/2023 Pumpkin Fest at the City Park 10am-3pm
- 10/31/2023 Downtown Trick or Treat 4-6pm
- 10/31/2023 United Methodist Church Trunk or Treat 5:30-7pm
- 11/23/2023 Community Thanksgiving at the Community Center 11:30am-1pm
- 12/02/2023 Tour of Homes, Live & Silent Auctions at Olive Grove Golf Course 4pm-close
- 12/09/2023 Santa Claus Day at Professional Management Services 9-11am

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WINNING NUMBERS

MEGA MILLIONS

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.15.23

5 13 29 50 53 25

MegaPlier: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$183,000,000

NEXT DRAW:

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LOTTO AMERICA

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

11 12 25 36 40 4

All Star Bonus: 4x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$2,100,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 32 Mins 49
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

LUCKY FOR LIFE

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.15.23

2 3 24 36 47 13

TOP PRIZE:

\$7,000/week

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins 49
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

DAKOTA CASH

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

1 7 10 27 29

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$43,000

NEXT 15 Hrs 47 Mins 49
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

DOUBLE PLAY

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

3 12 28 58 62 24

TOP PRIZE:
\$10,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins 49
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

POWERBALL

WINNING NUMBERS:
09.13.23

22 30 37 44 45 18

Power Play: 3x

NEXT ESTIMATED JACKPOT:
\$596,000,000

NEXT 16 Hrs 16 Mins 49
DRAW: Secs

[PREVIOUS RESULTS](#)

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News from the  Associated Press

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP FOOTBALL=

Aberdeen Roncalli 42, Mobridge-Pollock 22

Alcester-Hudson 34, Chester 20

Avon 32, Hitchcock-Tulare 28

Bennett County 28, New Underwood 12

Beresford 27, Flandreau 0

Bon Homme 28, Stanley County 22

Brandon Valley 35, Sioux Falls Roosevelt 0

Canistota 24, Elkton-Lake Benton 12

Centerville 46, Gayville-Volin High School 40

Chamberlain 46, Belle Fourche 0

Corsica/Stickney 50, Burke 15

Dakota Valley 42, Milbank 0

DeSmet 14, Wolsey-Wessington 6

Dell Rapids 48, Canton 30

Dell Rapids St. Mary 46, Arlington 8

Deubrook 50, Iroquois/ Lake Preston Co-op 0

Deuel 24, Groton Area 6

Elk Point-Jefferson 36, McCook Central/Montrose 8

Estelline/Hendricks 14, Colman-Egan 6

Faulkton 50, Northwestern 0

Gregory 50, Irene-Wakonda 0

Hamlin 43, Leola-Frederick High School 8

Harding County/Bison Co-op 51, Newell 0

Hill City 30, Lakota Tech 0

Howard 45, Freeman Academy/Marion 18

Huron 14, Sturgis Brown 10

Ipswich 44, Herreid/Selby Area 20

Jim River 20, Baltic 0

Kimball/White Lake 52, Potter County 0

Lemmon/McIntosh 20, Faith 18

Lennox 58, Custer 7

Little Wound 38, Standing Rock, N.D. 6

Parker 18, Clark/Willow Lake 14

Parkston 58, Oldham-Ramona/Rutland 0

Philip 53, Dupree 0

Pierre T F Riggs High School 27, Yankton 14

Platte-Geddes 30, Viborg-Hurley 21

Sioux Falls Christian 21, Madison 15

Sioux Falls Jefferson 41, Rapid City Central 0

Sioux Falls Lincoln 35, Harrisburg 20

Sioux Falls O'Gorman 47, Rapid City Stevens 0

Sioux Valley 42, Bridgewater-Emery/Ethan 6

Spearfish 31, Brookings 0

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Sully Buttes 38, Colome 14
Tea Area 66, Douglas 8
Timber Lake 29, Jones County 20
Tiospa Zina Tribal 36, Omaha Nation, Neb. 0
Wagner 18, Sisseton 15
Wall 48, White River 6
Warner 69, Castlewood 16
Watertown 41, Sioux Falls Washington 27
Waverly-South Shore 58, Florence/Henry 36
Webster 48, Dakota Hills 0
West Central 41, Vermillion 7
Woonsocket/Wessington Springs/Sanborn Central 41, Miller/Highmore-Harrold 0

Some high school football scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

Friday's Scores

The Associated Press

PREP VOLLEYBALL=

Edgemont def. Little Wound, 25-12, 25-10, 25-11

Sioux Falls Jefferson def. Rapid City Central, 25-11, 25-13, 25-7

Sioux Falls Roosevelt def. Rapid City Stevens, 25-15, 25-20, 23-25, 25-10

Some high school volleyball scores provided by Scorestream.com, <https://scorestream.com/>

A look at notable impeachments in US history, including Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton

By JOHN O'CONNOR Associated Press

Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton's impeachment trial on corruption allegations is among several such proceedings that have occurred in U.S. history.

Impeachment is a political proceeding, not a court one. Typically in a U.S. legislative body, it is the House of Representatives that impeaches an officeholder, charging him or her with wrongdoing. The Senate then conducts a trial, and a guilty verdict results in ejection from office. Sometimes that includes a stipulation that prevents future qualification to hold office.

In Texas, an impeachment charge from the House results in immediate suspension from office, as is the case for Paxton. The Senate is deliberating articles of impeachment to determine whether Paxton is permanently removed. He is accused of trying to protect an Austin real estate developer who was indicted in June on federal charges of making false statements to banks.

In the past 25 years, impeachment has been used three times against two presidents. The current GOP-led House has opened an impeachment inquiry into Democratic President Joe Biden, although it has not proceeded beyond that yet.

Nonetheless, impeachment remains a rarely used means of removing someone from office for serious legal or ethical misconduct and has played a significant role in U.S. history.

Some notable cases:

PRESIDENTS

Three U.S. presidents have been impeached, one twice, but all were acquitted by the Senate:

— Democrat Andrew Johnson, who had been Republican Abraham Lincoln's vice president, was targeted for impeachment by Radical Republicans in 1868 for 11 high crimes and misdemeanors, including replacing Secretary of War Edwin Stanton while Congress was not in session.

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— Democrat Bill Clinton was impeached in 1998 for perjury, obstruction of justice and abuse of power, notably denying a sexual relationship with Monica Lewinsky in a lawsuit filed by Paula Jones.

— Republican Donald Trump was impeached in 2019 for abuse of power and obstruction of Congress in seeking Ukrainian authorities' intervention to influence the 2020 presidential election. He was impeached in 2021 for incitement of insurrection in trying to overturn the 2020 presidential election results. Trump is the only U.S. president to be impeached twice.

GOVERNORS

Among 15 state governors who have been impeached, eight have been removed from office. They include Republican Gov. Evan Mecham of Arizona for financial crimes in 1988, the first gubernatorial impeachment in 60 years.

— Republican Gov. William Holden of North Carolina was impeached, convicted and removed from office in 1871 for illegally using military force when he reacted to white supremacists' violence by declaring martial law and having state troops arrest 100 Ku Klux Klansmen. The state Senate voted in 2011 to pardon him, but the House failed to concur.

— Democratic Gov. Rod Blagojevich of Illinois was impeached and removed from office in 2009 for misdeeds including attempting to sell the U.S. Senate seat vacated by then President-elect Barack Obama.

STATE ATTORNEYS GENERAL

Paxton has company as an impeached state attorney general.

— South Dakota Republican Attorney General Jason Ravnsborg was impeached and convicted in 2022 for his involvement in a 2020 crash in which the car he was driving hit a pedestrian. The impeachment charges accused him of committing a crime that led to a death and of misleading investigators.

— In Kansas, Republican Attorney General Roland Boyton was impeached with Auditor William French for their suspected involvement in a 1933 scandal in which the well-connected son of an influential banker, given access to the state vault, stole bonds and forged them. Boyton and French were acquitted.

JUDGES

Before Paxton, Texas had not held an impeachment trial since the 1970s, which ended in the conviction of a state judge.

Other impeached judges in the U.S. have included:

— U.S. District Judge Alcee Hastings was acquitted of a criminal charge of conspiracy to solicit a bribe in 1983, but he was impeached and convicted by the Senate in 1989. He was not barred from holding public office, however, and he was elected as a Democrat to a congressional seat from Florida from 1993 until his death in 2021.

— District Judge Charles L. Crum of Montana, whose strict adherence to constitutional principles and voicing of nonconformist views during World War I were perceived as pro-German and anti-patriotic, was impeached and removed from office in 1918. In 1991, the Montana Senate approved a resolution exonerating him.

AP researcher Jennifer Farrar in New York and AP statehouse correspondents from across the U.S. contributed.

Sioux Falls pauses plan to ditch arsenic-contaminated taxidermy display at state's largest zoo

By HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

The Sioux Falls mayor announced a "strategic pause" Friday in the city's plans to ditch an arsenic-contaminated menagerie of more than 150 taxidermy animals that fill a now-closed natural history museum at the state's largest zoo.

Mayor Paul TenHaken said in a news release that he has created a working group to figure out what to do with each of the mounted animals, including a lion, tiger and polar bear. The move follows intense pushback from the community and museum taxidermy experts, who say the arsenic risk is overblown.

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Older taxidermy specimens are frequently displayed, experts say, with museums taking precautions like using special vacuums to clean them or to encase them in glass. But Sioux Falls officials have said that would be costly.

The mayor acknowledged the concerns but said that taxidermy, in its current condition, cannot remain on the campus of the Great Plains Zoo.

"We collaborated with City Council leadership on this strategic pause to bring a clear plan forward that identifies what will happen to each specimen," he said.

The situation is complicated by a morass of state and federal laws that limit what can be done with the mounts. One issue is that the collection includes 53 endangered species, according to zoo officials, and they are protected even in death under federal law and international laws.

Sioux Falls businessman Henry Brockhouse hunted most of the animals in the collection during a series of international hunting expeditions that started around 80 years ago. They were mounted by some of the foremost taxidermists of the time — Jonas Brothers Taxidermy, no relation to the pop band — and displayed at Brockhouse's West Sioux Hardware store.

Following his death in 1978 and the subsequent closure of the store, his friend, C.J. Delbridge, snapped the collection up for \$550,000 and donated it to the city.

The natural history museum that bore Delbridge's name opened in 1984. Ultimately the original 150-animal Brockhouse collection grew to around 170 animals as other mounts were acquired, including a giant panda that was donated by China. Around 20 of the animals are in storage.

But the display occupies prime real estate near the zoo's entrance, which officials are eyeing as they look for a spot to build a new aquarium and butterfly conservatory. Currently, the taxidermy does not hold a strong draw for visitors, said Great Plains Zoo CEO Becky Dewitz.

"I think at one point in time it probably did," she said in a meeting last week, "but not today."

With some of them showing signs of wear, the zoo considered moving the ones in the best condition to a smaller space, but the arsenic is complicating that. Test results, returned last month, showed nearly 80% were positive for detectable levels of arsenic, and city officials said they aren't willing to take any chances.

The initial donation agreement, obtained by The Associated Press through a records request, said the collection needed to be kept behind glass or a suitable material to prevent touching. City officials insisted at last week's meeting that the barriers in place at the museum complied, but they also blamed some of the taxidermy damage to visitors ignoring signs and touching the mounts.

The city considered adding glass, but it would cost up to \$4.2 million to add it and upgrade the ventilation, Dewitz. She said an entirely new building of similar size would cost more than \$13 million. And then there is the cost of fixing the signage and updating the signs.

Instead, officials presented city councilors with a plan to declare the collection as surplus, a move that could lead to the disposal of many of the mounts.

"My soul is broken," lamented Brockhouse's daughter, Beverly Bosch.

Amid the backlash, multiple council members said last week that the city needed to slow down, possibly putting the mounts in storage while they weighed what to do. One possibility that was discussed was asking voters to pay for a new facility.

Councilor Greg Neitzert said he had natural history museum experts from around the country reaching out to him, expressing concerns.

"You'd have to close virtually every natural history museum in the world based on the presence of chemicals and artifacts," he said. "It's unnecessary and irrational."

Libya investigates dams' collapse after a devastating flood last weekend killed more than 11,000

By SAMY MAGDY and YOUSEF MOURAD Associated Press

DERNA, Libya (AP) — Libyan authorities have opened an investigation into the collapse of two dams that caused a devastating flood in a coastal city as rescue teams searched for bodies on Saturday, nearly a

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week after the deluge killed more than 11,000 people.

Heavy rains caused by Mediterranean storm Daniel caused deadly flooding across eastern Libya last weekend. The floods overwhelmed two dams, sending a wall of water several meters high through the center of Derna, destroying entire neighborhoods and sweeping people out to sea.

More than 10,000 people are missing, according to the Libyan Red Crescent. Six days on, searchers are still digging through mud and hollowed-out buildings, looking for bodies and possible survivors. The Red Crescent has confirmed 11,300 deaths so far.

Claire Nicolet, who heads the emergencies department of the Doctors Without Borders aid group, said that rescuers found "a lot of bodies" on Friday and were still searching.

"It was a big number ... the sea is still ejecting lots of dead bodies unfortunately," she told The Associated Press.

She said major aid efforts were still needed, including urgent psychological support for those who lost their families. She said the burial of bodies is still a significant challenge, despite some progress in coordinating search and rescue efforts and the distribution of aid.

Authorities and aid groups have voiced concern about the spread of waterborne diseases and shifting of explosive ordnance from Libya's recent conflicts.

Haider al-Saeih, head of Libya's center for combating diseases, said in televised comments Saturday that at least 150 people had suffered from diarrhea after drinking contaminated water in Derna. He urged residents to only drink bottled water, which is being shipped in as part of relief efforts.

Libya's General Prosecutor, al-Sediq al-Sour, said that prosecutors would investigate the collapse of the two dams, which were built in the 1970s, as well as the allocation of maintenance funds. He said prosecutors would investigate local authorities in the city, as well as previous governments.

"I reassure citizens that whoever made mistakes or negligence, prosecutors will certainly take firm measures, file a criminal case against him and send him to trial," he told a news conference in Derna late Friday.

It's unclear how such an investigation can be carried out in the North African country, which plunged into chaos after a NATO-backed uprising toppled longtime dictator Moammar Gadhafi in 2011. For most of the past decade, Libya has been split between rival administrations — one in the east, the other in the west — each backed by powerful militias and international patrons.

One result has been the neglect of crucial infrastructure, even as climate change makes extreme weather events more frequent and severe.

Jalel Harchaoui, an expert on Libya at the London-based Royal United Services Institute for Defence and Security Studies, said that an investigation could pose "a unique challenge" to judicial authorities, since it could lead to the highest ranks of leadership in eastern and western Libya.

Since 2014, eastern Libya has been under the control of Gen. Khalifa Hifter and his self-styled Libyan National Army. A rival government, based in the capital, Tripoli, controls most national funds and oversees infrastructure projects. Neither tolerates dissent.

"The key challenge to a thorough investigation is the Hifter coalition's longstanding behavior; its historic lack of accountability writ large could obstruct the unearthing of truths," Harchaoui said.

Local officials in the city had warned the public about the coming storm and last Saturday ordered residents to evacuate coastal areas in Derna, fearing a surge from the sea. But there was no warning about the dams, which collapsed early Monday as most residents were asleep in their homes.

A report by a state-run audit agency in 2021 said the two dams hadn't been maintained despite the allocation of more than \$2 million for that purpose in 2012 and 2013.

A Turkish firm was contracted in 2007 to carry out maintenance on the two dams and build another dam in between. The firm, Arsel Construction Company Ltd., said on its website that it completed its work in November 2012. It didn't respond to an email seeking further comment.

Local and international rescue teams were meanwhile working around the clock, searching for bodies and potential survivors in the city of 90,000 people.

Ayoub said that his father and nephew died in Derna on Monday, a day after the family had fled flooding

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in the nearby town of Bayda. He said that his mother and sister raced upstairs to the roof but the others didn't make it.

"I found the kid in the water next to his grandfather," said Ayoub, who only gave his first name. "I am wandering around and I still don't believe what happened."

Al-Sour, the top prosecutor, called on residents who have missing relatives to report to a forensic committee that works on documenting and identifying retrieved bodies.

"We ask citizens to cooperate and quickly proceed to the committee's headquarters, so that we can finish the work as quickly as possible," he said.

Libyan authorities have restricted access to the flooded city to make it easier for searchers to dig through the mud and hollowed-out buildings for the more than 10,000 people still missing. Many bodies were believed to have been buried under rubble or swept out into the Mediterranean Sea, they said.

The storm hit other areas in eastern Libya, including the towns of Bayda, Susa, Marj and Shahatt. Tens of thousands of people have been displaced in the region and took shelter in schools and other government buildings.

Dozens of foreigners were among those killed, including people who had fled war and unrest elsewhere in the region. Others had come to Libya to work or were traveling through in hopes of migrating to Europe. At least 74 men from one village in Egypt perished in the flood, as well as dozens of people who had traveled to Libya from war-torn Syria.

Samy Magdy reported from Cairo.

North Korea's Kim Jong Un inspects Russian bombers and a warship on a visit to Russia's Far East

By KIM TONG-HYUNG and HYUNG-JIN KIM Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected Russia's nuclear-capable bombers, hypersonic missiles and an advanced warship from its Pacific fleet on Saturday as he continued a trip in Russia's Far East that has sparked Western concerns about an arms alliance that could fuel President Vladimir Putin's war on Ukraine.

After arriving in the city of Artyom by train, Kim traveled to an airport just outside the port city of Vladivostok where Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu and other senior military officials gave him an up-close look at Russia's strategic bombers and other warplanes.

All the Russian warplanes shown to Kim on Saturday were among the types that have seen active use in the war in Ukraine, including the Tu-160, Tu-95 and Tu-22 bombers that have regularly launched cruise missiles.

Shoigu and Lt. Gen. Sergei Kobylash, the commander of the Russian long-range bomber force, explained to Kim that the Tu-160 had recently received new cruise missiles with a range of more than 6,500 kilometers (over 4,040 miles). Pointing at the weapons bay, Shoigu said that each bomber carries 12 missiles.

Russian officials have previously said that the new missile was under development, and the latest comments confirmed its deployment for the first time.

Shoigu, who had met Kim during a rare visit to North Korea in July, also showed Kim another of Russia's latest missiles, the hypersonic Kinzhal, carried by the MiG-31 fighter jet, that saw its first combat during the war in Ukraine, according to Russia's Defense Ministry.

Kim and Shoigu later traveled to Vladivostok, where they inspected the Admiral Shaposhnikov frigate. Russia's navy commander, Adm. Nikolai Yevmenov, briefed Kim on the ship's capabilities and weapons, which include long-range Kalibr cruise missiles that Russian warships have regularly fired at targets in Ukraine.

Kim's visits to military and technology sites this week possibly hint at what he wants from Russia, perhaps in exchange for supplying munitions to refill Putin's declining reserves as his invasion of Ukraine becomes a drawn-out war of attrition.

Kim's trip to Russia, which included more than four hours of talks with Putin on Wednesday, comes amid

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momentum in military cooperation between the countries in which North Korea could potentially seek Russian technologies to advance Kim's nuclear, missile and other military programs in exchange for providing Russia with badly needed munitions.

Videos released by Russia's Defense Ministry showed Shoigu greeting Kim at the airport along with honor guards lined up near a red carpet. Kim was seen peering at the Kinzhal missile, gesturing and asking questions about the warplanes' capabilities as he discussed technical details with Shoigu and other military officials through translators.

Kim was also seen talking to Shoigu and Yevmenov about a purported nuclear attack submarine the North unveiled last week as they stepped out of the Shaposhnikov frigate.

Later Saturday, Kim visited a local theater to watch Pyotr Tchaikovsky's Sleeping Beauty ballet performance, Russia's ambassador to Pyongyang, Alexander Matsegora, was quoted as saying by the Russian RIA Novosti state news agency. The agency said Kim left after the first act.

The visit follows Kim's tour on Friday of a factory producing advanced Russian warplanes.

Kim in recent months has emphasized the need to strengthen his navy to counter the advanced naval assets of the United States, which has been expanding its combined military exercises with South Korea to counter the North's growing threat.

Analysts say Kim's focus on naval strength could be driven by ambitions to obtain sophisticated technologies for ballistic missile submarines and nuclear-propelled submarines as well as to initiate joint naval exercises between Russia and North Korea.

After meeting Putin at Russia's main spaceport, a location that pointed to Kim's desire for Russian assistance in his efforts to acquire space-based reconnaissance assets and missile technologies, North Korea's leader reappeared Friday in the far eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur for a visit to a plant producing Russia's Su-57 fighter jets.

Experts have said potential military cooperation between the countries could include efforts to modernize North Korea's outdated air force, which relies on warplanes sent from the Soviet Union in the 1980s.

Kim's trip to Russia, his first since April 2019 when he met Putin in Vladivostok, came days after he attended a ceremony at a North Korean military shipyard where the country unveiled the alleged nuclear attack submarine.

State media claimed it is capable of launching tactical nuclear weapons from underwater. But South Korea's military expressed doubt about the operational capabilities of the sub, which was the result of reshaping an existing submarine to install missile launch tubes.

Kim has also announced goals to acquire nuclear-propelled submarines, which can quietly travel long distances and approach enemy shores to deliver strikes, a key asset in his efforts to build a viable nuclear arsenal that could threaten the United States. Analysts say such capacities would be unfeasible for the North without external assistance.

Putin on Friday reiterated that Russia would abide by U.N. sanctions, some of which ban North Korea from exporting or importing any weapons. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov separately said that no agreements on bilateral military cooperation were signed after the Putin-Kim meeting Wednesday.

Experts say North Korea and Russia aren't likely to publicize any deals on weapons to avoid stronger international criticism.

Kim, whose visit to Russia is his first foreign trip since the COVID-19 pandemic, has been eager to boost the visibility of his partnerships with Moscow and Beijing as he attempts to break out of international isolation and insert Pyongyang in a united front against Washington. Some South Korean experts say that Kim could also pursue a meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping.

In another sign of the North's post-pandemic opening, KCNA said Saturday that a team of North Korean athletes departed from Pyongyang to participate in the Asian Games starting next week in Hangzhou, China. South Korea's government says around 190 North Korean athletes are registered for the event.

Since last year, the U.S. has accused North Korea of providing ammunition, artillery shells and rockets to Russia, many of them likely copies of Soviet-era munitions. South Korean officials said North Korean

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weapons provided to Russia have already been used in Ukraine.

Millions under storm watches as Lee is downgraded but bears down on New England and Canada

By DAVID SHARP, ROBERT F. BUTAKY and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

PORTLAND, Maine (AP) — The National Hurricane Center downgraded Hurricane Lee to a post-tropical cyclone but millions of people remained under storm watches and warnings early Saturday as the storm still could produce hurricane-force winds, torrential rain and coastal flooding.

Severe conditions were predicted as a possibility across portions of Massachusetts and Maine and hurricane conditions could hit the Canadian provinces of New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, where the storm had been predicted to make landfall later Saturday.

The storm was located about 230 miles (365 kilometers) southwest of Halifax, Nova Scotia, and about 220 miles (355 kilometers) southeast of Eastport, Maine on Saturday morning.

There were more than 11,000 power outages from Massachusetts to Maine early Saturday. The wind had picked up and rain moved into eastern Massachusetts.

The hurricane center predicted hurricane-force winds extending more than 100 miles (161 kilometers) from Lee's center with lesser but still dangerous tropical storm-force gusts up to 345 miles (555 kilometers) miles outward.

States of emergency were declared for Massachusetts and Maine, the nation's most heavily forested state, where the ground was saturated and trees were weakened by heavy summer rains.

Cruise ships found refuge at berths in Portland, while lobstermen in Bar Harbor, Maine, and elsewhere pulled their costly traps from the water and hauled their boats inland, leaving some harbors looking like ghost towns on Friday.

Lee already lashed the U.S. Virgin Islands, the Bahamas and Bermuda before turning northward and heavy swells were likely to cause "life-threatening surf and rip current conditions" in the U.S. and Canada, according to the hurricane center.

Parts of coastal Maine could see waves up to 15 feet (4.5 meters) high crashing down, causing erosion and damage, and the strong gusts will cause power outages, said Louise Fode, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Maine. As much as 5 inches (12 centimeters) of rain was forecast for eastern Maine, where a flash flood watch was in effect.

But even as they hunkered down and prepared, New Englanders seemed unconcerned by the possibility of violent weather.

In Maine, where people are accustomed to damaging winter nor'easters, some brushed aside the coming Lee as something akin to those storms only without the snow.

"There's going to be huge white rollers coming in on top of 50- to 60-mph winds. It'll be quite entertaining," Bar Harbor lobsterman Bruce Young said Friday. Still, he had his boat moved to the local airport, saying it's better to be safe than sorry.

On Long Island, commercial lobsterman Steve Train finished hauling 200 traps out of the water on Friday. Train, who is also a firefighter, was going to wait out the storm on the island in Casco Bay.

He was not concerned about staying there in the storm. "Not one bit," he said.

In Canada, Ian Hubbard, a meteorologist for Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Canadian Hurricane Centre, said Lee won't be anywhere near the severity of the remnants of Hurricane Fiona, which washed houses into the ocean, knocked out power to most of two provinces and swept a woman into the sea a year ago.

But it was still a dangerous storm. Kyle Leavitt, director of the New Brunswick Emergency Management Organization, urged residents to stay home, saying, "Nothing good can come from checking out the big waves and how strong the wind truly is."

Destructive hurricanes are relatively rare this far to the north. The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 brought gusts as high as 186 mph (300 kph) and sustained winds of 121 mph (195 kph) at Massachusetts'

Blue Hill Observatory. But there have been no storms that powerful in recent years.

The region learned the hard way with Hurricane Irene in 2011 that damage isn't always confined to the coast. Downgraded to a tropical storm, Irene still caused more than \$800 million in damage in Vermont.

Sharp and Whittle reported from Portland. Associated Press writer Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed.

Poland is shaken by reports that consular officials took bribes to help migrants enter Europe and US

By VANESSA GERA Associated Press

WARSAW, Poland (AP) — Poland's conservative governing party was hoping to make migration a key campaign theme ahead of the country's national election. But not like this, with arrests, dismissals and an attempted suicide among its own ranks.

The Law and Justice party is being rocked by reports that Polish consulates issued visas in Africa and Asia in exchange for bribes, opening the door for migrants to enter the European Union — which some hoped to use as a way into the United States.

Details about the corruption scandal are coming to light a month ahead of the country's parliamentary election Oct. 15, leaving Law and Justice struggling to control the damage.

A former deputy foreign minister who was dismissed amid reports of his involvement in the scheme was hospitalized after an apparent suicide attempt.

Law and Justice has been the election frontrunner in a field of several parties, and it's not clear if the affair will dent its support. But opposition politicians have seized on the "visa affair," accusing the government of corruption and hypocrisy, given its strong anti-immigrant rhetoric.

Critics say the governing party raised the specter of immigration to frighten Poles and then offered promises of keeping them secure, while a corrupt cell operating within the diplomatic corps opened a channel for migrants to enter the EU.

"This is the biggest scandal we have faced in the 21st century. Corruption at the highest levels of government, bringing a direct threat to all of us. And it's because of people whose mouths are full of phrases about security," Senate Speaker Tomasz Grodzki, an opposition politician, said in a televised address to the nation Friday evening.

Poland has opened its door to Ukrainian refugees, who are primarily white and Christian, but governing party officials have long made clear that they consider Muslims and others from different religions or ethnicities to be a threat to the nation's traditionally Catholic cultural identity and security.

Media reports allege Poland's consular sections issued about 250,000 visas to migrants from Asia and Africa since 2021 in return for bribes of several thousand dollars each. Poland is a member of the EU's visa-free zone known as Schengen, and once those migrants arrived in Poland they could cross Europe's borders freely.

Szymon Holownia, who leads a center-right opposition party, said the governing party "jeopardized the safety of millions of Poles by conducting the disgusting, commercial practice of selling visas."

Government officials acknowledge some wrongdoing occurred.

The Foreign Ministry announced Friday it had dismissed an official "in connection with the ongoing findings regarding irregularities in the visa issuance process." It said the official was Jakub Osajda, the director of the ministry's office of legal and compliance management. It also announced an extraordinary audit of its consular department and all consular posts.

That followed the Aug. 31 dismissal of Piotr Wawrzyk, the deputy foreign minister in charge of consular matters, as the first reports of the scandal appeared in the media. Wawrzyk was hospitalized after a suicide attempt, Polish media reported Friday.

The state prosecutor's office said Thursday it charged seven people suspected of corrupt activities in accelerating visa procedures, with three of them under temporary arrest.

The prosecutor general, Zbigniew Ziobro, said authorities were working to bring the wrongdoers to justice and insisted the scale of the affair was smaller than what the media and opposition claim, with just 268 visas given out in the scheme.

He said Wawrzyk had written a farewell letter saying he wanted to die because he couldn't bear the hatred against him in the media. "He feels like a man hounded by this hate, because he feels like an honest man," Ziobro said.

Wawrzyk had been responsible for preparing a regulation making it easier for foreign workers from countries including Iran, Pakistan and United Arab Emirates to enter Poland.

According to the Onet news portal, Wawrzyk personally insisted that temporary work visas be issued to groups of people from India who posed as crews working for the Indian movie industry, popularly known as Bollywood. Onet said the Indians paid \$25,000 to \$40,000 for the visas, hoping to use them to reach the U.S. through Mexico. It reported that U.S. officials had alerted Poland to the matter.

State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller said at a briefing Thursday that he could not confirm the reports, adding, "I wouldn't want to speak to private conversations between our two governments."

The governing party fought back with new election videos on social media seeking to link the leading opposition leader, Donald Tusk, to widespread migration to Europe in his past roles. Tusk was the Polish prime minister from 2007 to 2014, and was president of the European Council, an EU body, from 2014 to 2019.

The government also is holding a referendum along with the election with questions on migration. One question asks voters whether they support accepting "thousands of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and Africa" as part of an EU relocation plan.

Law and Justice ran on a strong anti-migrant message when it won power in 2015, a crisis year for Europe when more than a million refugees and migrants fled from Syria and elsewhere. Party leader Jaroslaw Kaczynski said then that migrants brought diseases to Europe, as well as "parasites and protozoa" — remarks that were heavily criticized.

The party has refused to accept any of the migrants and refugees who have arrived in the EU in past years. It also built a tall steel wall on its border with Belarus to keep migrants out after large numbers began arriving there in 2021.

Ziobro, the prosecutor general who is also justice minister, has recently compared acclaimed director Agnieszka Holland's new film, "Green Border," to Nazi propaganda due to its critical depiction of the behavior of Polish security forces at the border with Belarus. Holland has threatened legal action against him.

Letter showing Pope Pius XII had detailed information from German Jesuit about Nazi crimes revealed

By NICOLE WINFIELD Associated Press

ROME (AP) — Newly discovered correspondence suggests that World War II-era Pope Pius XII had detailed information from a trusted German Jesuit that up to 6,000 Jews and Poles were being gassed each day in German-occupied Poland, undercutting the Holy See's argument that it couldn't verify diplomatic reports of Nazi atrocities to denounce them.

The documentation from the Vatican archives, published this weekend in Italian daily Corriere della Sera, is likely to further fuel the debate about Pius' legacy and his now-stalled beatification campaign.

Historians have long been divided about Pius' record, with supporters insisting he used quiet diplomacy to save Jewish lives while critics say he remained silent as the Holocaust raged.

Corriere is reproducing a letter dated Dec. 14, 1942 from the German Jesuit priest to Pius' secretary which is contained in an upcoming book about the newly opened files of Pius' pontificate by Giovanni Coco, a researcher and archivist in the Vatican's Apostolic Archives.

Coco told Corriere that the letter was significant because it represented detailed correspondence about the Nazi extermination of Jews from an informed church source in Germany who was part of the Catholic anti-Hitler resistance that was able to get otherwise secret information to the Vatican.

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The letter from the priest, the Rev. Lothar Koenig, to Pius' secretary, a fellow German Jesuit named the Rev. Robert Leiber, is dated Dec. 14, 1942. Written in German, the letter addresses Leiber as "Dear friend," and goes on to report that the Nazis were killing up to 6,000 Jews and Poles daily from Rava Ruska, a town in pre-war Poland that is today located in Ukraine, and transporting them to the Belzec death camp.

According to the Belzec memorial which opened in 2004, a total of 500,000 Jews perished at the camp. The memorial's website reports that as many as 3,500 Jews from Rava Ruska had already been sent to Belzec earlier in 1942 and that from Dec. 7-11, the city's Jewish ghetto was liquidated. "About 3,000-5,000 people were shot on the spot and 2,000- 5,000 people were taken to Belzec," the website says.

The date of Koenig's letter is significant because it suggests the correspondence from a trusted fellow Jesuit arrived in Pius' office in the same three weeks before Christmas 1942 that Pius was receiving multiple diplomatic notes from the British and Polish envoys to the Vatican with reports that up to 1 million Jews had been killed so far in Poland.

While it can't be certain that Pius saw the letter, Leiber was Pius' top aide and had served the pope when he was the Vatican's ambassador to Germany during the 1920s, suggesting a close working relationship especially concerning matters related to Germany.

According to "The Pope at War," by Pulitzer Prize-winning anthropologist David Kertzer, a top secretariat of state official, Monsignor Domenico Tardini, told the British envoy to the Vatican in mid-December that the pope couldn't speak out about Nazi atrocities because the Vatican hadn't been able to verify the information.

"The novelty and importance of this document comes from this fact: that on the Holocaust, there is now the certainty that Pius XII was receiving from the German Catholic Church exact and detailed news about crimes being perpetrated against Jews," Coco was quoted by Corriere as saying.

However, Coco noted that Koenig also urged the Holy See to not make public what he was revealing because he feared for his own life and those of the resistance sources who had provided the intelligence.

Pius' legacy, and the revelations from the newly opened Vatican archives, are to be discussed at a major conference at Rome's Pontifical Gregorian University next month that is notable because of its across-the-spectrum participant list and sponsorship. The Vatican, Israel's Yad Vashem Holocaust research institute, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial as well as the Israeli and U.S. embassies are all backing it, among others.

The Vatican secretary of state, Cardinal Pietro Parolin, is to open the Oct. 9-11 meeting that will feature scholars including Kertzer, Coco and Johan Ickx, the archivist at the Vatican secretariat of state whose own book on the archives, "Pius XII and the Jews" published in 2021, praised Pius and the Vatican's efforts to care for Jews and people fleeing the war.

Coco said Koenig's letter actually was found in the Vatican's secretariat of state archives and was turned over to the Vatican's main Apostolic Archives only in 2019, because the secretariat of state's papers were disorganized and scattered, with some of Pius' documents kept in plastic containers in an attic storage space where heat and humidity were damaging them.

Vanessa Gera contributed from Warsaw, Poland.

Dodgers on the cusp of NL West title after topping Mariners 6-3

By TIM BOOTH AP Sports Writer

SEATTLE (AP) — When the postseason rolls around, the Los Angeles Dodgers know they'll need more than just Mookie Betts and Freddie Freeman carrying the load at the top of the lineup.

Which is why a night where the likes of J.D. Martinez and Miguel Rojas carry the offense is important this late in the season.

"You got the two horses up front with Freddie and (Mookie) and you got to be able to have your three, four or five hitters protect those guys," Martinez said. "Tonight was one of those things where Freddie and Mookie didn't have to carry the load for once and we were able to get the job done."

Rojas and James Outman homered, Martinez had two key run-scoring singles and the Dodgers moved

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closer to the NL West title with a 6-3 victory over the Seattle Mariners on Friday night.

Los Angeles can wrap up the NL West for the 10th time in the last 11 seasons Saturday with a win over Seattle or help elsewhere. San Francisco plays a doubleheader in Colorado, and Arizona hosts the Cubs and a number of scenarios could leave the Dodgers celebrating by the time Saturday night ends.

Rojas hit a two-run homer off Seattle starter George Kirby to give Los Angeles the lead in the fifth inning. Max Muncy added an RBI triple, and Martinez had RBI singles in the sixth and eighth innings.

Outman hit his 20th homer of the season in the ninth inning.

"It's hard to simulate a playoff (game) but this environment tonight was pretty close," Dodgers manager Dave Roberts said.

Seattle failed to gain ground on Houston and Texas in the AL West after both teams lost. The Mariners remained 1 1/2 games behind the Astros and a game behind the Rangers.

Los Angeles starter Bobby Miller pitched 5 2/3 innings, allowing three runs and struck out seven on the day Roberts said Miller (10-3) would likely be one of the Dodgers' first two starting pitchers when the postseason begins.

This start had a playoff feel.

"I love that kind of energy out there. Got the blood flowing a little bit," Miller said. "I'm all for that kind of stuff. I feel like I stayed really calm out there when it got super loud. I like those moments a lot."

Miller allowed a solo home run to Eugenio Suárez and an RBI single to Teoscar Hernández in the sixth inning when Seattle pulled to 4-3. Hernández extended his on-base streak to 29 games, the longest active streak in the majors.

But the Mariners stranded runners in scoring position in the sixth, seventh and eighth innings as relievers Caleb Ferguson, Brusdar Graterol and Ryan Braiser got key outs to escape jams.

Evan Phillips allowed two hits in the ninth, but struck out Hernández to end it for his 23rd save.

"They got two-out RBI singles ... and we struggled to knock guys in," Seattle manager Scott Servais said.

Kirby (10-10) pitched for the first time since his start last week in Tampa Bay after which he said he wished to have not been sent out for the seventh inning of his start at 90 pitches — comments he apologized for a day later.

Kirby cruised into the fifth inning against the Dodgers before finding trouble.

Rojas was able to get his barrel to a 96 mph fastball above the strike zone and tailing toward him. The line drive had just enough height to clear the fence and land in the Dodgers bullpen.

An inning later, Will Smith was hit by a pitch with one out and scored from first on Muncy's first triple of the season. Martinez followed with a single and the Dodgers had a 4-1 lead.

Kirby allowed five hits and four runs in six innings. He struck out seven and threw 81 pitches.

"This game's testing me right now. I'm making good pitches. Just a lot of better swings. Just how it happens sometimes," Kirby said.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Dodgers: OF David Peralta was scratched from the lineup due to lower back tightness. ... RHP Michael Grove (lat strain) could rejoin the Dodgers during their next homestand, Roberts said. Grove has not pitched for the Dodgers since Aug. 5.

Mariners: LHP Marco Gonzales said surgery to repair a nerve issue in his left arm went well and he hopes to start a throwing program sometime in November. Gonzales, Seattle's nominee for the Roberto Clemente Award, pitched in only 10 games this season, the last coming in late May.

UP NEXT

Dodgers: LHP Clayton Kershaw (12-4, 2.61) will start for the first time in 11 days. Kershaw gave up three runs on five hits in five innings in a loss to the Marlins on Sept. 5. Since returning from the injured list in early August, Kershaw has not pitched more than five innings in any of his five starts.

Mariners: RHP Bryce Miller (8-5, 4.05) has just one victory in his last five starts. He was knocked around for five earned runs and nine hits over five innings in his last start against Tampa Bay.

Climate change could bring more monster storms like Hurricane Lee to New England

By MICHAEL CASEY Associated Press

BOSTON (AP) — When it comes to hurricanes, New England can't compete with Florida or the Caribbean. But scientists said Friday the arrival of storms like Hurricane Lee this weekend could become more common in the region as the planet warms, including in places such as the Gulf of Maine.

Lee remained a Category 1 hurricane late Friday night with sustained winds of 80 mph (128 kph). The storm was forecast to brush the New England coast before making landfall later Saturday in the Canadian province of Nova Scotia. States of emergency were declared for Massachusetts and Maine.

One recent study found climate change could result in hurricanes expanding their reach more often into mid-latitude regions, which include New York, Boston and even Beijing.

The study says the factors include warmer sea surface temperatures in these regions and the shifting and weakening of the jet streams, which are the strong bands of air currents encircling the planet in both hemispheres.

"These jet stream changes combined with the warmer ocean temperatures are making the mid-latitude more favorable to hurricanes," said Joshua Studholme, a Yale University physicist and the study's lead author. "Ultimately meaning that these regions are likely to see more storm formation, intensification and persistence."

Another recent study simulated tropical cyclone tracks from pre-industrial times, modern times and a future with higher emissions. It found hurricanes will move north and east in the Atlantic. The research also found hurricanes would track closer to the coasts including Boston, New York and Norfolk, Virginia, and more likely form along the Southeast coast, giving New Englanders less time to prepare.

"We also found that hurricanes are more likely to move most slowly when they're traveling along the U.S. East Coast, which causes their impacts to last longer and increase that duration of dealing with winds and storm surge," said Andra Garner, lead study author and an assistant professor of environmental science at Rowan University in New Jersey.

Garner noted the study results included New York City and Boston.

Kerry Emanuel, a professor emeritus of atmospheric science at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, who has long studied the physics of hurricanes, said parts of Maine will see more frequent hurricanes and heavier rains with each storm.

"We expect to see more hurricanes than we've seen in the last few decades. They should produce more rain and more wind," said Emanuel, who lives in Maine. "We certainly have seen up here an increase in the destructiveness of winter storms, which is a very different beast. I would say the bulk of the evidence, the weight of the evidence, is that we'll see more rain and more wind from these storms."

One reason for the trend is the region's warming waters.

The Gulf of Maine, for example, is warming faster than the vast majority of the world's oceans. In 2022, the gulf recorded the second-warmest year on record, beating the old record by less than half a degree Fahrenheit. The average sea surface temperature was 53.66 degrees Fahrenheit (12 degrees Celsius), more than 3.7 degrees above the 40-year average, scientists said.

"Certainly, when we think about storms forming and traveling at more northern latitudes, sea surface temperature comes into play a lot because hurricanes need those really warm ocean waters to fuel them," Garner said. "And if those warm ocean waters exist at higher latitudes than they used to, it makes it more possible for storms to move in those areas."

While hurricanes and tropical storms are uncommon in New England, the region has been seen its share of violent weather events. The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 brought gusts as high as 186 mph (300 kph) and sustained winds of 121 mph (195 kph) at Massachusetts' Blue Hill Observatory. Hurricanes Carol and Edna hit the region 11 days apart in 1954 and Hurricane Bob decimated Block Island in 1991.

Superstorm Sandy in 2012 caused damage across more than a dozen states and wreaked havoc in the Northeast when it made landfall near Atlantic City, New Jersey. Tropical Storm Irene killed six people in Vermont in August 2011, washing homes off their foundations and damaging or destroying more than 200 bridges and 500 miles (805 kilometers) of highway.

Experts warn that policy makers need to take projections of increased hurricane activity seriously and start upgrading their dams, roadways and neighborhoods for these future storms.

"We definitely in our coastal communities need to be thinking about how can we make our shorelines more resilient," Garner said.

"Do we need to change," she said, "where those flood zones are located, kind of thinking about how to perhaps protect the shorelines and think about solutions for that and adaptation kinds of things?"

Those making policy also can implement measures to keep emissions down so the worst effects of climate change don't materialize, Garner said.

Follow Michael Casey on X, formerly Twitter: @mcasey1

Associated Press climate and environmental coverage receives support from several private foundations. See more about AP's climate initiative here. The AP is solely responsible for all content.

Dozens of Syrians are among the missing in catastrophic floods in Libya, a war monitor says

By BASSEM MROUE Associated Press

BEIRUT (AP) — A Syrian dentist, a confectioner who made mouthwatering Arabic sweets, a carpenter. Syrians from all walks of life had left their war-torn country for the Libyan city of Derna over the past years, looking for work and better opportunities.

Now, dozens of them are missing and feared dead after Mediterranean storm Daniel unleashed catastrophic flooding that tore through the coastal city on Sunday night, wreaking destruction and washing entire neighborhoods out to sea.

The death toll has eclipsed 11,000 and more than 10,000 are missing. Five days on, searchers are still digging through mud and hollowed-out buildings in Derna, looking for bodies.

According to a war monitoring group, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, 42 Syrians have been confirmed dead in Libya while the real number could be as high as 150.

The victims include both Syrians who were living and working in Libya long term, and Syrian migrants who were using Libya as a transit point in efforts to reach Europe, most often by way of perilous voyages across the Mediterranean Sea, in unsafe boats organized by smugglers.

Two years ago, Nisma Jbawi's 19-year-old son Ammar Kanaan left their home in Syria's southern province of Daraa — one of the epicenters of the 2011 uprising against the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

He headed to Libya, where he planned to work and save money to pay Syrian authorities a fee of about \$8,000 that would spare him from compulsory military service.

Jbawi said her son last spoke with her on Sunday afternoon. He told her he would close the sweet shop where he worked and go home because a strong storm was expected. She tried repeatedly to call him on Monday, without success. His WhatsApp account shows his phone was last online at around 1:30 a.m. Monday.

"We still have hope," she said, tears choking her up.

As the storm pounded Derna late Sunday, residents said they heard loud explosions when the dams outside the city collapsed. Floodwaters washed down Wadi Derna, a river running from the mountains through the city and into the sea.

On Tuesday, Kanaan's uncle drove to Derna from the eastern Libyan city of Benghazi where he works — only to find that the building where his nephew lived had been washed out to sea.

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"All who were inside are presumed dead," Jbawi said.

Rami Abdurrahman, who runs the Observatory, said he has not been able to confirm a single survivor out of the 150 Syrians missing in Derna since Sunday night. But definite numbers are hard to come by in the chaotic aftermath of the destruction.

Like Syria, where the civil war has killed half a million people and forced more than 5 million to become refugees around the world, Libya has been through its own years of conflict.

The oil-rich North African country has been split between rival governments in the east and west since 2014, backed by with various militia forces and international patrons. Derna is governed by Libya's eastern administration, where military commander Khalifa Hiftar wields significant power.

Still, for some Syrians, Libya offered prospects of a better life. Syrians can easily get into Libya on a tourist visa and find work — wages are higher than what many earn at home.

Zeid Marabeh, 19, came to Libya two years ago from the central city of Homs and worked as a carpenter. He recounted to The Associated Press over the phone from Derna how he watched water surging toward his building on Sunday night.

"Then I heard a loud boom," Marabeh said. It was the moment the dams collapsed.

When water levels started rising in his neighborhood, he frantically ran toward higher ground — the nearby Eastern Shiha hill. From there, he saw the water destroy almost everything in its path.

He went back on Monday morning, after the waters subsided, to check on his uncle and relatives. The building where they lived had disappeared. His uncle, Abdul-Ilah Marabeh, his aunt Zeinab and their 1-year-old daughter Shahd were gone, he said.

Marabeh said he looked through the rows of bodies laid out on their street but could not find his uncle's family.

In the Syrian capital of Damascus on Thursday, members of the Qalaaji family were receiving condolences for their eight family members killed in Derna.

Firas Qalaji, his wife Rana Khateeb and their six children were to be buried in Libya, the family said in a statement.

Ghina al-Qassim said her nephew, Hani Turkomani, was a dentist who arrived in Derna some nine months ago "to improve his life." His cousins, already there, had found him a job.

After the floodwaters subsided, the cousins, who survived the tragedy, went looking for him. They said his apartment was full of water and mud but a large hole in the wall raised their hopes that he might have escaped from the building or been pulled out by rescue workers, al-Qassim said.

"God willing," she added.

Auto worker strike creates test of Biden's goals on labor and climate

By CHRIS MEGERIAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Two of President Joe Biden's top goals — fighting climate change and expanding the middle class by supporting unions — are colliding in the key battleground state of Michigan as the United Auto Workers go on strike against the country's biggest car companies.

The strike involves 13,000 workers so far, less than a tenth of the union's total membership, but it's a sharp test of Biden's ability to hold together an expansive and discordant political coalition while running for reelection.

Biden is trying to turbocharge the market for electric vehicles to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and prevent China from solidifying its grip on a growing industry. His signature legislation, known as the Inflation Reduction Act, includes billions of dollars in incentives to get more clean cars on the roads.

However, some in the UAW fear the transition will cost jobs because electric vehicles require fewer people to assemble. Although there will be new opportunities in the production of high-capacity batteries, there's no guarantee that those factories will be unionized and they're often being planned in states more hostile to organized labor.

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"The president is in a really tough position," said Erik Gordon, a professor at the University of Michigan's Ross School of Business. "What he needs to be the most pro-labor president ever and the greenest president ever is a magic wand."

The union is demanding steep raises and better benefits, and it's escalating the pressure with its targeted strike. Brittany Eason, who has worked for 11 years at the Ford Assembly Plant in Wayne, Mich., said workers are worried that they'll "be pushed out by computers and electric vehicles."

"How do you expect people to work with ease if they're in fear of losing their jobs?" said Eason, who planned to walk the picket line this weekend. Electric vehicles may be inevitable, she said, but changes need to be made "so everybody can feel secure about their jobs, their homes and everything else."

Biden on Friday acknowledged the tension in remarks from the White House, saying the transition to clean energy "should be fair and a win-win for auto workers and auto companies."

He dispatched top aides to Detroit to help push negotiations along, and he prodded management to make more generous offers to the union, saying "they should go further to ensure record corporate profits mean record contracts."

As part of its demands, the UAW wants to represent employees at battery plants, which would send ripple effects through an industry that has seen supply chains upended by technological changes.

"Batteries are the power trains of the future," said Dave Green, a regional director for the union in Ohio and Indiana. "Our workers in engine and transmission areas need to be able to move into the new generation."

Executives, however, are keen to keep a lid on labor costs as their companies prepare to compete in a global market. China is the dominant manufacturer of electric vehicles and batteries.

"The UAW strike and indeed the 'summer of strikes' is the natural result of the Biden administration's 'whole of government' approach to promoting unionization at all costs," said Suzanne Clark, CEO of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

Some environmental groups, conscious of how labor remains crucial to securing support for climate programs, have expressed support for the strike.

"We're at a really pivotal moment in the history of the auto industry," said Sam Gilchrist, deputy national outreach director at the Natural Resources Defense Council.

Presidential politics have increased the stakes for the strike, which could damage the economy going into an election year, depending on how long it lasts and whether it spreads. It's also centered in Michigan, a key part of Biden's 2020 victory and critical to his chances at a second term.

Former President Donald Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination, sees an opportunity to drive a wedge between Biden and workers. He issued a statement saying Biden "will murder the U.S. auto industry and kill countless union autoworker jobs forever, especially in Michigan and the Midwest. There is no such thing as a 'fair transition' to the destruction of these workers' livelihoods and the obliteration of this cherished American industry."

In an interview with NBC's "Meet the Press," Trump said that "electric cars are going to be made in China," not the United States, and he said "the auto workers are being sold down the river by their leadership."

Trump's comments have not earned him any support from Shawn Fain, president of the UAW.

"That's not someone that represents working-class people," he told MSNBC earlier this month. "He's part of the billionaire class. We need to not forget that. And that's what our members need to think about when they go to vote."

Ammar Moussa, a spokesman for Biden's campaign, said Trump "will say literally anything to distract from his long record of breaking promises and failing America's workers." He noted that Trump would have let auto companies go bankrupt during the financial crisis rather than bail them out as President Barack Obama did at the time.

But there are also disagreements between Biden and workers.

When the Energy Department announced a \$9.2 billion loan for battery plants in Tennessee and Kentucky, part of a joint venture by Ford and a South Korean company, Fain said the federal government was "actively funding the race to the bottom with billions in public money."

Madeline Janis, co-executive director of Jobs to Move America, which works on environmental and worker issues, said the White House needs to do more to alleviate labor challenges.

"We don't have enough career pathways for people to see themselves in this future and let go of the jobs in industries that are causing our world to be in crisis," she said.

Associated Press writer Joey Cappelletti contributed reporting from Lansing, Mich.

Military officers begin to speak out on the harm done by Sen. Tuberville's holds on promotions

By TARA COPP Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — In the months since a single senator froze military promotions over the Pentagon's abortion policy, the uniformed officers affected have been largely silent, wary of stepping into a political fray. But as the ramifications of Alabama Republican Sen. Tommy Tuberville's freeze have grown, more of them are speaking out.

This week, some of the military's most senior leaders took the issue head on and voiced their concerns. They said the damage the holds will do to the military will be felt for years, as young talented officers decide they've had enough and choose to get out.

"We're on the fringe of losing a generation of champions," Air Force Gen. Mark Kelly, the head Air Combat Command, told reporters this week at a defense conference in Maryland. Kelly said he's talking to his junior officers, many with families, and they are "people who will take a bullet for the nation, the Constitution." But when it comes to dragging their family through this, "there's a red line."

One of the unusual things about Tuberville's holds is he's punishing uniformed personnel who had nothing to do with creating the administration policy he's against.

Uniformed military leaders typically avoid commenting on political decisions, not only because they don't want to antagonize lawmakers who can block their future military promotions, but also because they don't want to be seen as challenging civilian control of the military, a core tenet of U.S. government.

But now even the Pentagon's soon-to-be highest military leader is speaking out. Navy Adm. Christopher Grady, who currently serves as the military's No. 2 officer as Joint Chiefs vice chairman, will simultaneously have to fill in as chairman starting Oct. 1 with the retirement of Gen. Mark Milley if his replacement, Air Force Gen. C.Q. Brown, can't get confirmed in the next two weeks. Brown is also subject to Tuberville's hold.

"We need C.Q. Brown to be confirmed as the next chairman of the Joint Chiefs," Grady said Wednesday at the Air and Space Forces Association conference.

For younger officers who are stuck in limbo by the holds, "the fact that folks can't plan for their moves or get their kids in school" is what is hurting them, Grady said. "There is a cumulative cost to this and we need to be very attuned to that."

In the last few years, there's been a slew of political orders that have had a direct impact on the military. There was former President Donald Trump's order that transgender personnel could not serve, and then the restoration of that service under the Biden administration, the mandate for COVID-19 vaccines and now the response to new state laws restricting access to abortion.

"Some of the orders that are given by civilians to the military, that the military then has to carry out, can make the military seem political," said Mark Harkins, a senior fellow at the Government Affairs Institute at Georgetown University. "If whatever the civilian control has asked them to do, if that order, that rule that they're following is against what you believe, then you're going to say they're political."

Tuberville announced the holds late last year after the Supreme Court ruled in *Dobbs* that abortion limits should be left to the states, and the Biden administration's civilian Pentagon head, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin, responded by instituting a policy that Tuberville says violates federal law.

Under the policy, service members, who often do not get a say in where they are assigned, are reimbursed for travel costs incurred for seeking an abortion or other reproductive care if they are serving in a state that has outlawed those services.

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Tuberville says the policy violates a federal law that says Defense Department funds may not be used for abortions, except in cases of rape, incest or where the life of the mother is threatened.

So in March, Tuberville exercised a privilege that allows any single senator to place a hold on a nomination, except he put a blanket hold on all military general officer nominations and said he would not lift it until the policy is rescinded.

Putting the hold on service members rather than on civilian nominees has a larger impact because civilian posts often go unfilled for months and a career civilian fills in, said Larry Korb, a senior fellow at the Center for American Progress.

It's not the first time general officer promotions have been frozen by a single senator. In July 2020, Democratic Sen. Tammy Duckworth of Illinois put a blanket hold on military promotions in response to reports that Trump was interfering with the promotion of Army Lt. Col. Alexander Vindman, who was a witness in the former president's impeachment inquiry. Duckworth dropped the hold two weeks later after learning Vindman had been selected for promotion. Vindman, however, retired, citing a "campaign of bullying, intimidation and retaliation" after multiple delays to his promotion convinced him there was not a viable future for him in the military.

Six months into Tuberville's hold, 315 military officers are now affected, and the impact cuts deeper in some services. In the small and still growing U.S. Space Force, at least eight general officers' nominations are on hold — but that's one third of all of its 25 senior officers. In the Marine Corps, at least 18 general officers among the Corps cadre of 88 can't move to their new commands, or are being stretched too thin by having to cover the duties of their current job while also being responsible for the vacancy they cannot officially fill.

"It's disruptive," said Gen. Chance Saltzman, chief of Space Force operations. "The people that we want in the jobs, that we know they're going to be value-added in, we're not in a position to put them there."

However the head of Army forces in the Pacific, Gen. Charles Flynn, told reporters this week the holds were not affecting his operations. "I don't see any practical challenges that it's creating in the region," Flynn said, according to a transcript provided by the Army.

Kori Schake, the director of foreign and defense policy studies at the American Enterprise Institute, said while military officers are concerned about the holds and their use as a "political cudgel," it is inappropriate for them to speak out.

"It's not just the president who provides civilian control of the military; constitutionally, Congress also serves that function. We wouldn't want our military criticizing the president's partisan political acts, so we shouldn't want them doing it about Congress, either," Schake said.

On Thursday, Tuberville watched as another officer, Adm. Lisa Franchetti, who would become the first female chief of naval operations, testified about the impact of the holds during her confirmation hearing at the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Franchetti said if the holds are lifted, it will take three to four months to get the three-star general officers in place, but it will take years to recover from the impact the promotion delays are having on lower-level officers.

That's because as each officer is promoted, it creates an opportunity for a more junior officer to rise. The military is capped at the numbers of personnel it can have at each rank, so keeping a colonel from being promoted to a general means there are younger lieutenant colonels who can't get promoted to colonel. That affects pay, retirement, lifestyle and future assignments — and in some fields where the private sector will pay more, it becomes harder to convince those highly trained young leaders to stay.

And at one point when asked why she hadn't been briefed on a specific submarine funding study, Franchetti noted the job strains the holds are creating, since she is doing the job both of vice chief of naval operations and acting chief of the service.

"I think it's just my own bandwidth capacity right now," she said.

Tuberville made no mention of the vote delays, instead saying he looked forward to Franchetti's service as chief. And he told her to keep the military out of politics and "leave it to us politicians."

Kelly, a career fighter pilot whose retirement has deferred because of the holds, had sharp words about

their impact.

"The situation is not instilling confidence in our allies, and it is instilling confidence in our adversaries," Kelly said. In the nation's capital, "that popping sound you hear is not stray gunfire. It's champagne corks in the Chinese Embassy bouncing off the walls."

Lita C. Baldor contributed from Washington.

Uncertain and afraid: Florida's immigrants grapple with a disrupted reality under new law

By GISELA SALOMON Associated Press

MIAMI (AP) — For many in Florida's vast immigrant community, daily life in recent months has become one governed entirely by fear.

Some try to drive as little as possible and make fewer trips to the supermarket. Others no longer take their children to the park and worry about allowing them to attend school. Others still are hiding out — avoiding travel to other states, not getting regular medical check-ups, or closing their businesses and leaving town. And many are just on high alert — all because of a new immigration law Republican Gov. Ron DeSantis signed in May.

One of the strictest in the nation, the law criminalized transporting immigrants lacking permanent legal status into the state, invalidated any U.S. government identification they might have and blocked local governments from providing them with ID cards. Florida hospitals that receive Medicaid are now mandated to ask patients about immigration status and businesses employing 25 or more people must verify their workers' legal status.

Other aspects of the law go into effect next year.

DeSantis, who is running for president, signed the bill in hopes of appealing to conservative voters and has criticized President Joe Biden's administration for the massive influx of migrants at the southern border.

"You have a duty to ensure that these borders are secure," DeSantis said at the time, signing the law a day before federal immigration rules enacted during the pandemic ended.

Since then, Associated Press interviews with a dozen immigrants found that daily routines have been upended for fear of being detained, separated from their families and deported.

For one woman, who asked not to be identified for fear of being detained, the change in the law has left her feeling like she traded one world of fear for another.

"I imagined that we were coming to the U.S. to have a better life, to be calmer, but that was not the case," she said. "There is always the fear that something could happen to us."

The 31-year-old single mother of four fled the violence of Honduras for the safety of the U.S. two years ago. Upon arrival, she sought asylum and worked as a house painter to support her daughters and her mother, who still lacks permanent legal status after crossing into the U.S. illegally six years ago.

Before the new law passed, the woman says her mother helped out by driving her grandchildren to school. Now, she is afraid police will ask her to show a driver's license and detain and deport her for not having one.

"She tries not to go out too much, she is being be very careful," she said.

The new law also cost the woman her painting job.

She says her employer — a Salvadoran man also without permanent legal status — abruptly closed his business and left the state. Though she found another job, she worries about supporting her family — she doesn't have the economic resources to move elsewhere.

Florida is home to about 4.6 million people that are foreign-born, and nearly three-quarters are from Latin America and the Caribbean. At least 825,000 lack permanent legal status, according to the most recent Pew Research Center survey from 2017. And about half of those people contribute to Florida's workforce and economy in key industries including agriculture, construction, hospitality and more, according to the

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American Business Immigration Coalition.

"(The law) is impacting their ability to just go about their day like they used to," said Shalyn Fluharty, an immigration attorney and executive director of the nonprofit law firm American for Immigrant Justice.

Experts like Fluharty characterize the law as vague and confusing, asserting that it raises concerns of mandatory detention, arrests and felony convictions for individuals who have no way of knowing they could be a target, including U.S. citizens who may be transporting immigrants without permanent legal status into the state.

"Whether or not you should be afraid really kind of depends on your unique, individualized, factual circumstances," Fluharty said. Her advice: If you are afraid, consult with a lawyer.

But not everyone can contact a lawyer.

Many have simply changed their way of living — even families of mixed legal status, with some members being U.S. citizens and others without permanent legal status.

Salvador Rosas, a 22-year-old college student, was born in central Florida along with his two brothers. While Rosas and his siblings are U.S. citizens, other family members are not. Their parents, who came to the state in 1999 after leaving Mexico, and their grandmother are living in the country illegally.

Before the new law passed, the family used to drive to Chicago once or twice a year to visit Rosas' grandmother. Now, with fears of being detained and separated, Rosas' parents and grandmother have mutually canceled all travel plans — even with 1,000 miles (1,600 kilometers) between them.

"That's very hard already," he said.

Rosas' mother has lived many years separated from her family in Mexico, and "now, it is going to be like a separation between states," he said.

Despite being a U.S. citizen, Rosas himself fears being detained while traveling and returning to Florida.

Rosas' and others' fears are not unfounded — authorities are already enforcing the law.

A Mexican man who arrived in Florida a year ago was arrested last month while returning from a work trip to Georgia. The Mexican consulate told the AP that the man was stopped by police for driving a van with window tints that appeared darker than the legal limit.

He was arrested and later charged with not having a valid driver's license and multiple counts of smuggling "illegal individuals" into the state, according a Florida Highway Patrol report and court documents. A police report showed that six other people were in the vehicle with the man, including a minor.

The man's arrest echoes the experience of another immigrant who spoke with the AP.

A 45-year-old Mexican man, who asked not be identified for fear of being deported, said a routine traffic stop in 2011 led to a monthlong detention and his later deportation for not having a driver's license.

His wife was pregnant at the time and although he reunited with his family after crossing the border illegally five months later, he missed the birth of his second child.

After Florida's law passed, he moved 1,500 miles (2,400 kilometers) northwest to Wisconsin with his wife and three children after the law passed. The move was worth it. He said he feels "comfortable, calm, more confident" in the Midwest state — a far cry from Florida, where he felt "anxious, pressured and afraid of any police."

"I'm not going to leave my family alone," he said. "I've been through that once."

What if public transit was like Uber? A small city ended its bus service to find out

By JEFF McMURRAY Associated Press

When a small city abruptly parked all its buses to launch a publicly subsidized van service offering \$1.50 trips anywhere in town, only one of its bus drivers — a big-city transplant — went along for the ride.

Milton Barnes used to oversee packed subway stations in Washington, D.C., a far cry from the sparsely filled buses he drove after moving to Wilson, North Carolina, to care for his elderly parents. Although tran-

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Public transit ridership plummeted almost everywhere due to the pandemic, it has been surging in Wilson since its September 2020 switch from a fixed-route system to an on-demand one powered by a smartphone app.

"All day long I'm picking up people and dropping them off," Barnes, 59, the only driver to work under both systems, said while driving his van on a typically busy morning. "When you've got door-to-door, corner-to-corner service, it's going to be more popular."

Long wait times made the bus route almost unusable for David Bunn, even when his car broke down and he couldn't afford to replace it. Instead, Bunn, who has two broken discs in his back, would take a 5-mile (8-kilometer) roundtrip walk to pick up groceries. Then he spotted one of the public vans and dialed the phone number posted in a rear window.

"I don't have to walk everywhere I want to go now," said Bunn, 64. "They come pick me up, they're respectful, and they're very professional. It's a great asset to Wilson and a great service to me."

The city of less than 50,000 people is frequently cited as a model for how less-populated areas can capitalize on transit in the same way as bustling metropolises.

Wilson landed federal and state infrastructure grants to support the shared, public rides residents summon — usually within 15 minutes — through a service operating like Uber and Lyft, but at a fraction of the cost to riders. Trips are now \$2.50, a dollar more than they were at launch, and Bunn quips, "you can't drive a Pinto for that."

Other communities in North Carolina and elsewhere took notice and have tapped into available public funding to start programs of their own, heightening Wilson's competition for continuing grant money.

These smaller-scale, tech-based solutions to public transportation problems, known broadly as microtransit, have emerged as a great equalizer in the battle for infrastructure dollars that has traditionally pit the bus, train and subway needs of urban areas against the road construction projects sought by rural communities.

"We don't view transit as something only for big cities," U.S. Transportation Secretary Pete Buttigieg told The Associated Press. "We want people to benefit wherever they live, including in less-dense, rural areas. The point of transit is not to have a bus. The point of transit is getting people where they need to be."

Ryan Brumfield, director of the North Carolina's Department of Transportation integrated mobility division, said Wilson's transition to microtransit came largely by necessity. Officials seeking to lower Wilson's sluggish unemployment rate first had to address the fact that in some pockets of the 23-square-mile (59-square-kilometer) city, as many as 3 in 10 residents lacked access to a car to get to work.

"That combination of a lot of people needing a service and it happens to be fairly dense makes on-demand a perfect fit," Brumfield said.

More than half the rides are for residents using the vans to "maintain or get employment," said Rodger Lentz, Wilson's assistant city manager who pushed for the switch.

But need and convenience weren't the only reasons behind the city's 300% spike in public transit ridership. Image was a factor, too.

"In small, southern towns, the perception of public transportation is that it's for the low-income," said Gronna Jones, Wilson's transportation manager. "There's a stigma attached to riding the bus. Going to microtransit and nontraditional vehicles removed that stigma."

Wilson partnered with New York-based Via, one of the nation's top microtransit companies, to create the software and launch the on-demand public van service known as RIDE.

Via started operations seven years earlier with what was then a consumer service offering shared van rides in parts of Manhattan's Upper East Side where the New York City subway didn't go. But founder and CEO Daniel Ramot said he always considered Via a public transit company, not a private competitor to Uber, though it took a while for cities to buy in.

"We literally could not get a meeting," Ramot said. "They said it was the dumbest idea they'd ever heard, that it was never going to work, that public transit was buses and trains."

The first city to sign a public contract with Via was the Texas capital of Austin, where certain corridors were adequately served by city buses but others were considered transit deserts. Since then, Via has ex-

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panded operations to fill the transportation gaps in a broad range of communities in the U.S. and beyond.

On the Blackfeet Reservation in rural Montana, residents can use its app to order door-to-door rides. At one of the nation's busiest airports, Chicago's O'Hare, overnight FedEx cargo workers now use it to get home.

"Every movement is individual," said Melinda Metzger, executive director at PACE, a bus system in the Chicago area that teamed with Via this summer for the O'Hare pickup service. "People are going different directions, and the biggest thing is patterns have changed. We have to understand and adjust to them."

Although the pandemic drastically altered the nation's transportation needs, it also helped illustrate one of microtransit's greatest assets: the ability to be nimble. Subway systems and even major bus lines lack flexibility to instantly change service as demand changes, but microtransit is designed exactly for such fluctuations, if it's tailored specifically to each community.

"This is not the music man, where you just bring it from town to town," said Alvaro Villagran, director of federal programs at the Shared-Use Mobility Center, which helps grant recipients with microtransit projects. "There are opportunities and challenges at the local level that need to be considered."

Still, the biggest challenge of all is largely universal: cost.

While the Biden administration has prioritized mass transit and microtransit projects, providing grants through the \$1 trillion infrastructure law enacted in 2021, there is soaring demand for a limited amount of money.

Even Wilson won't be able to operate under its microtransit pilot program forever without finding new ways to pay for it, said Kai Monast, associate director of the Institute for Transportation Research and Education at North Carolina State University.

Monast predicts that although Wilson will remain committed to microtransit, the community eventually will return in part to a fixed-route system, adjusted heavily from the data gathered through years of on-demand van rides. But he trusts the city's creativity to make it more efficient.

"It could be that they'll find an answer that has never existed before," Monast said.

McMurray reported from Chicago.

Republican presidential hopefuls generally overlook New Hampshire in effort to blunt Trump in Iowa

By STEVE PEOPLES AP National Political Writer

MANCHESTER, N.H. (AP) — Once upon a time, the moderates, the mavericks and the underdogs in presidential politics had a chance to break through in New Hampshire.

Former Sen. John McCain, an independent-minded Republican, resurrected his anemic campaign with a victory in the state's first-in-the-nation presidential primary in 2008. Bill Clinton, a centrist Democrat from Arkansas, became the "comeback kid" by exceeding expectations here in 1992. And little-known Georgia peanut farmer, Jimmy Carter, would go on to claim the presidency after winning the state's 1976 Democratic primary.

But this year, New Hampshire's primary tradition may be little more than a fairy tale as the presidential field largely overlooks the Granite State.

Democratic officials, who have rallied behind President Joe Biden, have already decided to bypass New Hampshire in favor of South Carolina. And the crowded Republican field is focusing its money, time and attention on Iowa, betting big that the Midwestern state's religious conservatives are most likely to help them stop former President Donald Trump's march toward the GOP nomination.

This weekend alone, no fewer than eight Republican White House hopefuls are descending upon Iowa for the state's Faith and Freedom Coalition annual meeting. It marks the third multi-candidate gathering in the state in two months, while New Hampshire hasn't hosted one.

The shift toward Iowa, which hosts the nation's opening presidential caucuses on Jan. 15 shortly before New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary, began in recent years as the national GOP lurched rightward.

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But as New Hampshire's prominence fades further in 2024, it's unclear whether there will be sufficient oxygen or opportunity for anyone to emerge as a serious Trump challenger in the state best known for political upsets.

Former New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie, the most aggressive anti-Trump Republican in the race, is the only GOP White House contender to campaign in New Hampshire since Monday. He's devoting the vast majority of his time to the Granite State — and South Carolina, to a lesser degree.

"There's a lot of people competing in Iowa — hard — and not as many people competing hard in New Hampshire," Christie said in an interview. "I think it's a mistake and I think I'm going to benefit from it."

He acknowledged Trump's strength among the GOP base, but suggested the former president cannot ultimately create the broad coalition likely needed to defeat Biden next November.

"If the nominee is Donald Trump, we're going to lose the general election. And I think that's tragic for the country and for our party, but I think it's completely avoidable," Christie said. "But if it's gonna start, it's gonna start here."

Indeed, New Hampshire Republican officials have been more willing than most to speak out against Trump.

Republican Gov. Chris Sununu has come out forcefully against Trump and is working to boost his rivals. Former state GOP chair Jennifer Horn is a fierce Trump critic. And New Hampshire's former Republican national committeeman, Steve Duprey, endorsed Biden over Trump in 2020.

In an interview, Sununu conceded Trump is dominating the race, but he insisted the majority of Republican primary voters remain open to someone else.

"People are clearly looking for an alternative," Sununu said. "There's a lot of opportunity for that alternative — I'm not saying he's more moderate — I think it's just seeing a new generation of conservative leadership."

The evolving dynamic between Iowa and New Hampshire underscores a growing tension within a Republican Party that must ultimately appeal to both its hardline conservative base and moderates and independents who play an outsized role in the general election. Iowa's presidential caucuses tend to feature the most conservative Republican voters, especially evangelical Christians. New Hampshire, however, hosts an "open" primary election that allows voters to participate regardless of party affiliation.

Marc Colcombe, a 63-year-old Republican voter from Hillsborough, New Hampshire, said he's looking for a presidential nominee who "understands that everybody's got something good they bring to the table and foster those relationships and bring everybody together."

A former Trump supporter, Colcombe says he's now deeply concerned that no one appears to be emerging as a viable alternative to the divisive former president. He shared his fears during a Christie appearance at a local brewery this week that may have attracted as many members of the press as voters.

"You've got to put your ego aside and do what's right," Colcombe said. "Trump can't do that because his ego rules everything he does."

And while there is real resistance to Trump in New Hampshire, his rivals are devoting most of their time and money to Iowa for the foreseeable future.

Republican presidential candidates and their allies have reserved almost \$30 million in TV, radio and online advertising across Iowa compared to \$19 million in New Hampshire for the period beginning Sunday through the primary phase of the campaign, according to an AP analysis of AdImpact data. The spending disparity has been consistent since Trump launched his campaign last fall. As of Friday, Republican candidates and their allies have already spent \$38 million across Iowa advertising compared to less than \$23 million in New Hampshire.

Meanwhile, Christie had New Hampshire to himself this week. Over the same seven-day period, eight GOP candidates made at least 32 separate appearances in Iowa.

Former Vice President Mike Pence appeared at more than a dozen public events this week in Iowa. Conservative entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy made three stops in Iowa on Thursday alone. Both Nikki Haley, the former ambassador to the United Nations, and South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott were set to make at least three Iowa stops of their own over the weekend. Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis was set to appear

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there at least twice.

There are exceptions to the trend.

Haley, who may be more popular with her party's establishment wing than its base, has divided her time evenly between New Hampshire and Iowa.

She's in the midst of her 10th trip to Iowa covering 44 campaign events, according to spokesperson Nachama Soloveichik. Haley has hosted another 49 events in New Hampshire over nine separate trips, although a 10th is scheduled for next week.

"Our team is committed to both Iowa and New Hampshire because Nikki is campaigning for every vote," Soloveichik said. "No one will outwork Nikki Haley."

DeSantis, who casts himself as Trump's chief rival, has increasingly narrowed his focus to Iowa as he struggles for momentum. After this weekend, the Florida governor will have made 23 appearances in New Hampshire, compared to 70 in Iowa, according to spokesperson Andrew Romeo. He said DeSantis is not ignoring New Hampshire, having attended a July 4th celebration and unveiled his economic policy there.

For Ramaswamy, battling DeSantis for second place in primary polls, Wednesday night's rally in Davenport marked his 100th Iowa event, spokesperson Tricia McLaughlin said. He's hosted 65 events in New Hampshire, including two last Sunday.

Despite the Iowa bias, McLaughlin noted that Ramaswamy has multiple county chairs for every county and nearly 50 municipal chairs across New Hampshire.

Veteran New Hampshire Republican strategist Mike Dennehy noted that the shift toward Iowa, which began in recent elections, coincides with the GOP's shift to the right.

"For better or worse, the candidates running for president are more conservative than in years past. To be perfectly honest, I'm not sure George W. Bush would fit into this field," Dennehy said, highlighting the party's political challenge in next year's general election. "Republicans have to win over moderate to right-of-center Republicans who aren't evangelicals or aren't hard-right conservative voters. ... New Hampshire plays a pivotal role for that purpose."

And despite New Hampshire's storied role as a launching pad for underdogs, Dennehy is skeptical there will be a happy ending for Trump's rivals in 2024.

"I wouldn't bet anything on anything on anything at this point — other than Trump winning," he said.

Zach Eflin and the Rays limit the Orioles to 2 hits, win 7-1 to pull even in AL East

By PATRICK STEVENS Associated Press

BALTIMORE (AP) — Zach Eflin and two relievers combined on a two-hitter, Brandon Lowe and Harold Ramirez homered, and the Tampa Bay Rays beat the Baltimore Orioles 7-1 on Friday night to pull into a virtual tie atop the AL East.

Tampa Bay, which has won nine of 11 and 18 of 24, has erased a season-high four-game deficit in a span of six days thanks in part to winning the first two of a four-game series against Baltimore.

Heston Kjerstad homered leading off the sixth — his first major league hit — for the Orioles, who have dropped four in a row to match their longest skid of the season. Baltimore (91-56) still leads the Rays (92-57) by percentage points in the division race.

Kjerstad's homer was the only hit Eflin (15-8) surrendered in seven innings.

"He was pretty outstanding," Tampa Bay manager Kevin Cash said. "He's come up big for us all season long. To date, you can probably make the case this is the biggest game of the year for us. He certainly had the right mentality, the approach, the efficiency, the willingness to just kind of attack. They threw out a really tough lineup against him and he navigated it really well."

Eflin, who leads the AL in victories, allowed just one baserunner in the first five innings. Gunnar Henderson reached on third baseman Isaac Paredes' fielding error to lead off the first, but was erased two batters later when Anthony Santander grounded into a double play.

"It was probably the most mellow I've been all year, pre-start," Eflin said. "Those are normally pretty

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fun days, honestly. It's really easy to overthink this game, and I'm at the point in my career where I just go out there and execute. I don't worry about results, because that's a long, dark, deep hole. I just go out and be a competitor and have fun and see where it takes me."

Eflin's bid to throw the second no-hitter in Rays history and first since Matt Garza's in 2010 ended when Kjerstad smashed a cutter to right field. It was the first big league start for Kjerstad, who made his debut Thursday as a pinch-hitter.

"I don't think he threw a ball where he didn't want to the entire night," Baltimore manager Brandon Hyde said. "He was getting the ball into our left-handers, and he was also keeping us honest away. He made the one sort-of mistake. Kjerstad put a good swing on it, (but he) pretty much carved us up."

Eflin struck out eight and threw 60 of his 84 pitches for strikes after lasting just five innings in back-to-back starts to begin the month.

"I think pretty much everything felt pretty good," Eflin said. "It was kind of one of those games where (catcher René) Pinto would call a pitch and I would most of the time execute it, which is what I try to do every time but I hadn't been able to do that the past couple outings."

Jake Diekman walked Aaron Hicks and yielded Cedric Mullins' single to begin the eighth but struck out the next three batters. Chris Devenski pitched a perfect ninth.

The teams combined for two baserunners in the first three innings before Tampa Bay got to Baltimore starter Jack Flaherty. Lowe led off the fourth with a homer to right-center, and Manuel Margot later added an RBI single.

Flaherty (8-9) was lifted after surrendering back-to-back singles to begin the fifth. Jacob Webb allowed Lowe's sacrifice fly, but escaped further damage.

Baltimore reliever DL Hall gave up three consecutive hits to open the sixth, including Margot's RBI double. Ramírez, pinch hitting for Luke Raley, then blasted Bryan Baker's first pitch to left-center to make it 7-0.

"I know I got that ball pretty good, so I just felt really happy," said Ramírez, who added an elevated bat flip as a flourish.

TRAINER'S ROOM

Orioles: RHP Félix Bautista (elbow) played catch before the game. ... Hyde said 1B Ryan Mountcastle (shoulder) was feeling better after leaving Wednesday's game and sitting Thursday.

JONES HONORED

Former Baltimore OF Adam Jones was honored before the game, hours after ceremonially retiring with the franchise with which he spent the bulk of his career.

Jones played 11 of his 14 seasons with Baltimore, earning five All-Star appearances, four Gold Gloves and one Silver Slugger award. He was a key part of playoff teams in 2012, 2014 and 2016. Since the franchise moved to Baltimore in 1954, Jones ranks fourth among Orioles in hits (1,781) and fifth in homers (263), RBIs (866) and runs (875).

UP NEXT

Rays: RHP Tyler Glasnow (9-5, 3.15 ERA) is 0-1 with a 6.35 ERA in two starts against Baltimore this season.

Orioles: RHP Grayson Rodriguez (5-4, 4.88) is 3-2 with a 2.95 ERA in 10 starts since returning to the majors on July 17.

AP MLB: <https://apnews.com/hub/MLB>

Prosecutors seek narrow gag order on Trump in federal election case after 'inflammatory' comments

By ERIC TUCKER Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal prosecutors are seeking an order that would prevent Donald Trump from making "inflammatory" and "intimidating" comments about witnesses, lawyers and other people involved in the criminal case charging the former president with scheming to overturn the 2020 presidential election.

Special counsel Jack Smith's team said in a motion filed Friday that such a "narrow, well-defined" order

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was necessary to preserve the integrity of the case and to avoid prejudicing potential jurors.

Prosecutors had foreshadowed for weeks their concerns about Trump's verbal attacks, but Friday's request marks the first time they have proposed formal action to rein in speech that they say risks tainting the case and causing court workers and witnesses to live in fear of being targeted. The motion lays out what prosecutors say is a pattern of "false and inflammatory" statements about the case as well as comments meant to intimidate or harass people he believes are potential witnesses against him.

"Since the grand jury returned an indictment in this case, the defendant has repeatedly and widely disseminated public statements attacking the citizens of the District of Columbia, the Court, prosecutors, and prospective witnesses," prosecutors wrote. "Through his statements, the defendant threatens to undermine the integrity of these proceedings and prejudice the jury pool."

They said Trump's rhetoric has already had an impact, noting how jurors in the trial of a man convicted of participating in the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol recently sent a note conveying concern that he might have information about their identity.

If the order is granted, Trump would be forced to dramatically limit the type of comments he makes about the case even as he seeks to turn his criminal woes — the Washington prosecution is one of four that he currently faces — to his political advantage while running to reclaim the White House in 2024. Still, it was not immediately clear what sanctions Trump could face if he fails to curb his speech or how the judge, Tanya Chutkan, might enforce even a limited gag order.

Trump showed no signs of toning down his words, complaining about the motion on Truth Social shortly after it was filed and repeating his claim that the FBI and Justice Department had been "weaponized." He repeated his familiar refrains that President Joe Biden was "crooked" and that Smith was "deranged."

"They Leak, Lie, & Sue, & they won't allow me to SPEAK," Trump wrote.

Speaking to the Family Research Council in Washington later Friday night, said Smith "wants to take away my First Amendment rights."

"They want to see if they can silence me. So the media, the fake news, will ask me a question. 'I'm sorry, I won't be able to answer that.' How do you think we do in that election? So we're gonna have a little bit of fun with that, I think," Trump said.

Trump's lawyers also oppose the request, prosecutors wrote in their motion, and a Trump spokesperson said in a statement: "This is nothing more than blatant election interference because President Trump is by far the leading candidate in this race. The American people — the voters — see right through this un-Constitutional charade and will send President Trump back to the White House."

Beyond the narrow gag order, prosecutors also asked for an order that would prevent the Trump team from contacting District of Columbia residents to conduct polling, jury studies and focus groups without the judge's permission.

The efforts to weaken faith in the court system, the prosecutors wrote, mirror his attacks on the 2020 election, which he falsely claimed that he had won.

"The defendant is now attempting to do the same thing in this criminal case — to undermine confidence in the criminal justice system and prejudice the jury pool through disparaging and inflammatory attacks on the citizens of this District, the Court, prosecutors, and prospective witnesses," they wrote.

Among the statements cited by prosecutors in their motion is a post on his Truth Social platform days after the indictment in which Trump wrote, in all capital letters, "If you go after me, I'm coming after you!" He has also repeatedly alleged on social media that the case against him is "rigged" and that he cannot receive a fair trial.

And he has attacked in personal terms the prosecutors bringing the case — calling Smith "deranged" and his team "thugs" — as well as the Chutkan, the judge presiding over the case.

The issue surfaced last week with the disclosure by the Justice Department that it sought to file a motion related to "daily" public statements by Trump that it said it feared would taint the jury pool. Chutkan on Friday granted permission to prosecutors to file a redacted motion publicly, with names and identifying information of individuals who say they've been harassed as a result of Trump's attacks blacked out.

Also Friday, Smith's team pushed back against the Trump team request to have Chutkan recuse herself from the case. Defense lawyers had cited prior comments from Chutkan that they say cast doubt on her ability to be fair, but prosecutors responded that there was no valid basis for her to step aside.

Follow Eric Tucker on Twitter at <http://www.twitter.com/etuckerAP>

Hurricane Lee targets New England and eastern Canada with wind, roiling seas and rain

By DAVID SHARP, ROBERT F. BUTAKY and PATRICK WHITTLE Associated Press

BAR HARBOR, Maine (AP) — Fishermen removed lobster traps from the water and residents hauled hundreds of boats ashore — leaving some harbors looking like ghost towns — while utility workers from as far away as Tennessee began taking up positions Friday ahead of Hurricane Lee's heavy winds, high seas and rain that's expected to span hundreds of miles (kilometers) of land and sea.

The storm is projected to be more than 400 miles (640 kilometers) wide with tropical-storm-force winds when it reaches land, creating worries of power outages in Maine, the nation's most heavily forested state, where the ground is saturated and trees are weakened from heavy summer rains.

Lee remained a hurricane with 80 mph (128 kph) winds at night as it headed toward New England and eastern Canada with 20-foot (6-meter) ocean swells, strong winds and rain. Forecasters said there would be winds topping 40 mph (64 kph) across the region, with peak winds reaching upward of 65 mph (104 kph), ahead of landfall expected Saturday afternoon .

There was little else to be done but wait and worry, and make final preparations as Lee spun about 300 miles (485 kilometers) southeast of Nantucket, Massachusetts.

In Bar Harbor, there were only two lobster boats in the water compared with 20 to 25 on a normal day. Lobsterman Bruce Young said his 38-foot (12-meter) vessel was transported to the local airport, saying it's better to be safe than sorry. "There's going to be huge white rollers coming in on top of 50 to 60 mph winds. It'll be quite entertaining," he said.

On Long Island, commercial lobster fisherman Steve Train had just finished hauling 200 traps out of the water. Train, who is also a firefighter, was going to wait out the storm on the island in Casco Bay.

He was not concerned about staying there in the storm. "Not one bit," he said.

In South Thomaston, Dave Cousens, who lost fishing gear when Hurricane Bob came through in 1991, said lobstermen were busy moving their traps, which cost \$100 to \$170 apiece, out of harm's way to try to avoid damage from the rough seas.

While landfall was projected for nearby Nova Scotia, the Category 1 system was big enough to cause concerns over a wide area even if it weakens to a tropical storm. Parts of coastal Maine could see waves up to 15 feet (4.5 meters) high crashing down, causing erosion and damage, and the strong gusts will cause power outages, said Louise Fode, a National Weather Service meteorologist in Maine. As much as 5 inches (12 centimeters) of rain was forecast for eastern Maine, where a flash flood watch was in effect.

In Canada, Ian Hubbard, a meteorologist for Environment and Climate Change Canada and the Canadian Hurricane Centre, said Lee won't be anywhere near the severity of the remnants of Hurricane Fiona, which washed houses into the ocean, knocked out power to most of two provinces and swept a woman into the sea a year ago.

But it was still a dangerous storm. Kyle Leavitt, director of the New Brunswick Emergency Management Organization, urged residents to stay home, saying, "Nothing good can come from checking out the big waves and how strong the wind truly is."

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau was convening the incident response group, which meets only to discuss events with major implications for Canada, on Friday. Consisting of Cabinet ministers and senior officials, it was previously convened over events including the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and the record wildfire season this year.

Massachusetts Gov. Maura Healey joined Maine in declaring a state of emergency and asking the Federal

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Emergency Management Agency to issue a pre-disaster emergency declaration. She also activated up to 50 National Guard members to help with storm preparations, including operating highwater vehicles to respond to flooded areas.

The storm's arrival was expected just days after heavy flooding and tornadoes in New England.

"As we've seen in recent weeks, severe weather is not to be taken lightly. Flooding, wind damage, downed trees, tree limbs — all these things create real hazards and problems for people," Healey said.

East Hampton, New York, barred swimming — and, in at least some places, even walking — on beaches because of dangerous surf. Caution tape was strung up along the edge of the sand at the tony second-home community's picturesque Main Beach, where waves already were roiling Friday afternoon, News12 Long Island video showed.

In Rhode Island, Gov. Dan McKee said crews were working to secure the iconic 11-foot-tall (3.4-meter-tall) "Independent Man" statue atop the State House dome. Workers wanted to safeguard the 500-pound statue against the storm's wind and rain after a drone recently captured footage showing damage to the base.

In Maine, where people are accustomed to damaging winter nor'easters, some brushed aside the coming Lee as something akin to those storms only without the snow.

"We fear nor'easters up here more than the remnants of a tropical storm," said Andrea Silverthorne, who works in reception and reservations at the Inn on the Wharf in Lubec, Maine's easternmost town.

Many tourists were caught up in the storm.

Kent Thomas and his wife Robin, from Chapel Hill, North Carolina, watched the weather reports closely before deciding to travel to Mount Desert Island, home to Acadia National Park. They're used to big storms back home, so they're going with the flow.

"We'll hunker down like everyone else with the winds and the weather," Kent Thomas said while visiting Bar Harbor. "We have a lot of experience with tropical storms and hurricanes in North Carolina. Power outages and tree damage go with the territory."

Destructive hurricanes are relatively rare this far to the north. The Great New England Hurricane of 1938 brought gusts as high as 186 mph (300 kph) and sustained winds of 121 mph (195 kph) at Massachusetts' Blue Hill Observatory. But there have been no storms that powerful in recent years.

The last storm to make landfall in New England as a hurricane was Bob, which tore across Cape Cod and charged northward toward Maine, losing steam and becoming a tropical storm, according to the National Weather Service.

The region learned the hard way with Hurricane Irene in 2011 that damage isn't always confined to the coast. Downgraded to a tropical storm, Irene still caused more than \$800 million in damage in Vermont.

For this storm, part of Maine was briefly under a hurricane watch for the first time since 2008, for Hurricane Kyle, which skirted eastern Maine. The last hurricane to make landfall in Maine was Hurricane Gerda, which hit Eastport in 1969.

Sharp and Whittle reported from Portland. Associated Press writer Rob Gillies in Toronto contributed.

US: Mexico extradites Ovidio Guzmán López, son of Sinaloa cartel leader 'El Chapo,' to United States

By CHRISTOPHER SHERMAN Associated Press

MEXICO CITY (AP) — Mexico extradited Ovidio Guzmán López, a son of former Sinaloa cartel leader Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzmán, to the United States on Friday to face drug trafficking, money laundering and other charges, U.S. Attorney General Merrick Garland said in a statement.

"This action is the most recent step in the Justice Department's effort to attack every aspect of the cartel's operations," Garland said.

The Mexican government did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Mexican security forces captured Guzmán López, alias "the Mouse," in January in Culiacan, capital of Sinaloa state, the cartel's namesake.

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Three years earlier, the government had tried to capture him, but aborted the operation after his cartel allies set off a wave of violence in Culiacan.

January's arrest set off similar violence that killed 30 people in Culiacan, including 10 military personnel. The army used Black Hawk helicopter gunships against the cartel's truck-mounted .50-caliber machine guns. Cartel gunmen hit two military aircraft forcing them to land and sent gunmen to the city's airport where military and civilian aircraft were hit by gunfire.

The capture came just days before U.S. President Joe Biden visited Mexico for bilateral talks followed by the North American Leaders' Summit.

On Friday, Garland recognized the law enforcement and military members who had given their lives in the U.S. and Mexico. "The Justice Department will continue to hold accountable those responsible for fueling the opioid epidemic that has devastated too many communities across the country."

Mike Vigil, former head of international operations for the Drug Enforcement Administration, said he believed the Mexican government facilitated the extradition, because for someone of Guzmán López's high profile it usually takes at least two years to win extradition as attorneys make numerous filings as a delaying tactic.

"This happened quicker than normal," Vigil said, noting that some conservative members of the U.S. Congress had raised the idea of U.S. military intervention if Mexico did not do more to stop the flow of drugs. Vigil dismissed that idea as "political theater," but suggested it added pressure on Mexico to act.

Homeland Security Adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall said in statement that the extradition "is testament to the significance of the ongoing cooperation between the American and Mexican governments on countering narcotics and other vital challenges, and we thank our Mexican counterparts for their partnership in working to safeguard our peoples from violent criminals."

Sherwood-Randall made multiple visits to Mexico this year to meet with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, most recently last month.

In April, U.S. prosecutors unsealed sprawling indictments against Guzmán and his brothers, known collectively as the "Chapitos." They laid out in detail how following their father's extradition and eventual life sentence in the U.S., the brothers steered the cartel increasingly into synthetic drugs like methamphetamine and the powerful synthetic opioid fentanyl.

The indictment unsealed in Manhattan said their goal was to produce huge quantities of fentanyl and sell it at the lowest price. Fentanyl is so cheap to make that the cartel reaps immense profits even wholesaling the drug at 50 cents per pill, prosecutors said. The brothers denied the allegations in a letter.

The Chapitos became known for grotesque violence that appeared to surpass any notions of restraint shown by earlier generations of cartel leaders.

Vigil described Guzmán López as a mid-level leader in the cartel and not even the leader of the brothers. "It's a symbolic victory but it's not going to have any impact whatsoever on the Sinaloa cartel," he said. "It will continue to function, it will continue to send drugs into the United States, especially being the largest producers of fentanyl."

Fentanyl has become a top priority in the bilateral security relationship. But López Obrador has described his country as a transit point for precursors coming from China and bound for the U.S., despite assertions by the U.S. government and his own military about fentanyl production in Mexico.

López Obrador blames a deterioration of family values in the U.S. for the high levels of drug addiction in that country.

An estimated 109,680 overdose deaths occurred last year in the United States, according to numbers from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. About 75,000 of those were linked to fentanyl and other synthetic opioids.

Inexpensive fentanyl is increasingly cut into other drugs, often without the buyers' knowledge.

Mexico's fentanyl seizures typically come when the drug has already been pressed into pills and is headed for the U.S. border.

U.S. prosecutors allege much of the production occurs in and around Culiacan, where the Sinaloa cartel

exerts near complete control.

The Texas Senate is deliberating at Republican Attorney General Ken Paxton's impeachment trial

By PAUL J. WEBER, JIM VERTUNO and JAKE BLEIBERG Associated Press

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) — The impeachment trial of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton moved Friday into the hands of a Senate jury that was deciding whether the embattled Republican should be removed from office over corruption allegations that have shadowed him for years.

The jury of mostly GOP senators met for about eight hours, in secret, without emerging for a vote. Deliberations were set to resume Saturday.

The deliberations pushed Paxton, whose three terms in office have been marred by scandal and criminal charges, closer to a defining test of his political durability after an extraordinary impeachment that was driven by his fellow Republicans and has widened party fractures in America's biggest red state. For nearly a decade, Paxton has elevated his national profile by rushing his office into polarizing courtroom battles across the U.S., winning acclaim from Donald Trump and the GOP's hard right.

Making one final appeal to convict Texas' top lawyer, impeachment mangers who included Paxton's former friends cast him as a crook. The time has come, they argued, for the state and the Republican Party to sever ties.

"If we don't keep public officials from abusing the powers of their office, then frankly no one can," Republican state Rep. Andrew Murr, who helped lead the impeachment in the Texas House, said in his closing arguments.

If convicted, Paxton would become Texas' first statewide official convicted on impeachment charges in more than 100 years. A verdict could arrive later Friday.

In an angry and defiant rebuttal, Paxton lawyer Tony Buzbee unleashed attacks on a wide-ranging cast of figures both inside and outside the Texas Capitol, mocking a Texas Ranger who warned Paxton he was risking indictment and another accuser who cried on the witness stand.

Leaning into divisions among Republicans, Buzbee portrayed the impeachment as a plot orchestrated by an old guard of GOP rivals. He singled out George P. Bush, the nephew of former President George W. Bush who challenged Paxton in the 2022 Republican primary, punctuating a blistering closing argument that questioned the integrity of FBI agents and railed against Texas' most famous political dynasty.

"I would suggest to you this is a political witch hunt," Buzbee said. "I would suggest to you that this trial has displayed, for the country to see, a partisan fight within the Republican Party."

Paxton, who until Friday had attended only the first few hours of the trial, sat at the defense table and sipped from a cup, occasionally picking up his cellphone.

His return did not go unnoticed.

"He hasn't even bothered to be here for the whole trial," Murr said. "Clearly he thinks he might get away with this."

Sitting across the room from Paxton was his wife, state Sen. Angela Paxton, who was required to attend the whole trial but is barred from participating in deliberations or voting on her husband's political fate.

In the Senate gallery were three of Paxton's former deputies who reported him to the FBI in the 2020, accusing him of breaking the law to help Austin real estate developer Nate Paul. All of them testified, included the former Texas Ranger, David Maxwell.

Their whistleblower accounts launched an FBI investigation that will continue regardless of the verdict. Federal prosecutors investigating Paxton took testimony in August before a grand jury in San Antonio, according to two people with knowledge of the matter who spoke on condition of anonymity because of secrecy rules around the proceeding.

One said the grand jury heard from Drew Wicker, Paxton's former personal aide. At the impeachment trial, Wicker testified that he once heard a contractor tell Paxton he would need to check with "Nate" about the cost of renovations to the attorney general's Austin home.

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Paul was indicted in June on charges of making false statements to banks to obtain more than \$170 million in loans. He has pleaded not guilty.

During closing arguments, the defense told senators there was either no evidence for the charges or that there wasn't enough to rise beyond a reasonable doubt. The House impeachment managers, by contrast, walked through specific documents and played clips of testimony by the deputies who reported Paxton to the FBI.

The last word of closing arguments came from one of Paxton's former friends, Republican state Rep. Jeff Leach, who said he "loved" his onetime political mentor and that they attended church together. Still, he told senators, Paxton deserved punishment.

One of the impeachment articles centers on an alleged extramarital affair Paxton had with Laura Olson, who worked for Paul. It alleges that Paul's hiring of Olson amounted to a bribe. She was called to the witness stand but ultimately never testified. Another article alleges the developer also bribed Paxton by paying for his home renovations.

The verdict will be decided by 30 of the 31 state senators, most of them Republicans. Convicting Paxton on any of the 16 articles of impeachment requires a two-thirds majority, meaning if all 12 Democrats vote to convict, they would need nine Republicans to join them.

Deliberations will be done privately. Republican Lt. Gov. Dan Patrick has said the trial will continue through the weekend if necessary.

Paxton received renewed support from Trump on Thursday, as the former president blasted the impeachment as "shameful" in a social media post.

For years, Trump has fanned the flames of his supporters' distrust of the FBI in the face of legal troubles. Buzbee leaned into those misgivings Friday and his words at times appeared aimed at an audience beyond the senators in the room.

"Do we believe that the FBI is always on the up and up?" he said. "Or can we all agree that sometimes they pick and they choose who they go after?"

Like Trump, Paxton faces an array of legal troubles. Besides the federal investigation for the same allegations that gave rise to his impeachment, he also faces a bar disciplinary proceeding over his effort to overturn the 2020 election and has yet to stand trial on state securities fraud charges dating to 2015.

He pleaded not guilty in the state case, but his lawyers have said removal from office might open the door to a plea agreement.

Bleiberg reported from Dallas. Associated Press reporter Juan A. Lozano contributed to this report from Austin.

Find AP's full coverage of the impeachment of Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton at: <https://apnews.com/hub/ken-paxton>

Hawaii officials say DNA tests drop Maui fire death count to 97

By JENNIFER SINCO KELLEHER and REBECCA BOONE Associated Press

WAILUKU, Hawaii (AP) — Authorities in Hawaii have adjusted the number of deaths from the deadly Maui wildfire down to at least 97 people.

Officials previously said they believed at least 115 people had died in the fire, but further testing showed they had multiple DNA samples from some of the victims. The number of those who are missing also fell from 41 to 31, Maui Police Chief John Pelletier said.

John Byrd, laboratory director with the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency, said during a news conference Friday afternoon that the current number of dead should be considered a minimum, because it's possible that toll could rise.

Determining the death toll from the Aug. 8 wildfire in Lahaina has been especially complicated because of the damage caused by the fire and the chaos as people tried to escape, officials said. In some cases,

animal remains were inadvertently collected along with human remains.

So far, 74 of the deceased have been positively identified, Pelletier said.

The Lahaina fire is the deadliest in the U.S. in more than a century. Caught in a hellscape, some residents died in their cars, while others jumped into the ocean or tried to run for safety. The blaze reduced much of the historic town to ash.

"When the fire broke out, people ran together, they huddled together," said Dr. Jeremy Stuelpnagel, Maui County physician's coroner. "They're holding each other in those moments. Some of them were even holding pets." Because of this, some remains arrived commingled.

Byrd said the initial death tally was too high for several reasons, adding that the lower tally now was the "normal and natural" progression of the long-term forensics investigation.

"We look at body bags that come in and we do an initial inventory and we assess how many people are represented there," he said. "When you do the first tally of all those that have come in, the number tends to be too high because as you begin to do more analysis and examination you realize that actually you've got two bags that were the same person or you have two bags that were the same two people but you didn't realize that."

"The numbers start a little too high on the morgue side and eventually settles until at some point it's going to be a final accurate number. I would say we're not quite there yet," Byrd said.

Only people who have had a missing person report filed for them with the Maui Police Department are on the verified missing list, Pelletier said. If a missing person report hasn't been filed for someone more than five weeks after the fire, then that person probably isn't actually missing, the chief said.

Stuelpnagel wasn't supposed to start in his new role until October. But he sped up his start date and arrived on Maui from New York City soon after the fire. Until he arrived, Maui's medical examiner duties were shared with other counties.

"When this happened it was time to drop everything and come here," he said.

Stuelpnagel said people working on the identification process are trying to "reunify people to have them as whole as they're able to be," before the remains are returned to their loved ones.

The work to reunite fire victims with families involves more than just DNA tests, officials said. Anthropologists are assisting, and officials are gathering clues from dental work and medical devices like pacemakers when possible.

Authorities expressed relief at having a better grasp on the number of dead and those still unaccounted for in the wildfire.

"For the very first time ... we legitimately have a chance to identify every single person we lost and to reunite them with their family," Pelletier said. "And so in the midst of all this tragedy, there's a little ray of hope right there and so that really is incredible."

Boone reported from Boise, Idaho.

Workers strike at all 3 Detroit automakers, a new tactic to squeeze companies for better pay

By TOM KRISHER, MIKE HOUSEHOLDER and JOHN SEEWER Associated Press

DETROIT (AP) — Nearly one in 10 of America's unionized auto workers went on strike Friday to pressure Detroit's three automakers into raising wages in an era of big profits and as the industry begins a costly transition from gas guzzlers to electric vehicles.

By striking simultaneously at General Motors, Ford and Chrysler owner Stellantis for the first time in its history, the United Auto Workers union is trying to inflict a new kind of pain on the companies and claw back some pay and benefits workers gave up in recent decades.

The strikes are limited for now to three assembly plants: a GM factory in Wentzville, Missouri, a Ford plant in Wayne, Michigan, near Detroit, and a Jeep plant run by Stellantis in Toledo, Ohio.

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The workers received support from President Joe Biden, who dispatched aides to Detroit to help resolve the impasse and said the Big 3 automakers should share their "record profits."

Union President Shawn Fain says workers could strike at more plants if the companies don't come up with better offers. The workers are seeking across-the-board wage increases of 36% over four years; the companies have countered by offering increases ranging from 17.5% to 20%.

Workers out on the picket lines said they hoped the strikes didn't last long, but added that they were committed to the cause and appreciated Fain's tough tactics.

"We didn't have a problem coming in during COVID, being essential workers and making them big profits," said Chrism Hoisington, who has worked at the Toledo Jeep plant since 2001. "We've sacrificed a lot."

In its previous 88-year history, UAW had always negotiated with one automaker at a time, limiting the industrywide impact of any possible work stoppages. Each deal with an automaker was viewed as a template, but not a guarantee, for subsequent contract negotiations.

Now, roughly 13,000 of 146,000 workers at the three companies are on strike, making life complicated for automakers' operations, while limiting the drain on the union's \$825 million strike fund.

If the contract negotiations drag on — and the strikes expand to affect more plants — the costs will grow for workers and the companies. Auto dealers could run short of vehicles, raising prices and pushing customers to buy from foreign automakers with nonunionized workers. It could also put fresh stress on an economy that's been benefiting from easing inflation.

The new negotiating tactic is the brainchild of Fain, the first leader in the union's history to be elected directly by workers. In the past, outgoing leaders picked their replacements by choosing delegates to a convention.

But that system gave birth to a culture of bribery and embezzlement that ended with a federal investigation and prison time for two former UAW presidents.

The combative Fain narrowly won his post last spring with a fiery campaign against that culture, which he called "company-unionism," which he said sold out workers by allowing plant closures and failing to extract more money from the automakers.

"We've been a one-party state for longer than I've been alive," Fain said while campaigning as an adversary to the companies rather than a business partner.

David Green, a former local union leader elected to a regional director post this year, said it's time for a new way of bargaining. "The risks of not doing something different outweigh the risks of doing the same thing and expecting a different result," Green said.

During his more than two-decade career at General Motors, Green saw the company close an assembly plant in Lordstown, Ohio, that employed 3,000 workers. The union agreed to a series of concessions made to help the companies get through the Great Recession. "We've done nothing but slide backward for the last 20 years," Green said, calling Fain's strategy "refreshing."

Carlos Guajardo, who has worked at Ford for the past 35 years and was employed by GM for 11 years before that, said he likes the new strategy.

"It keeps the strike fund lasting longer," said Guajardo, who was on the picket line in Michigan Friday before the sun came up.

The strikes will likely chart the future of the union and of America's homegrown auto industry at a time when U.S. labor is flexing its might and the companies face a historic transition from building internal combustion automobiles to making electric vehicles.

The walkouts also will be an issue in next year's presidential election, testing Biden's claim to being the most union-friendly president in American history.

The limited-strike strategy could have ripple effects, GM CEO Mary Barra said Friday on CNBC.

Many factories are reliant on each other for parts, Barra said. "We've worked to have a very efficient manufacturing network, so yes, even one plant is going to start to have impact."

Citing strike disruptions at its Wayne plant, Ford told about 600 non-striking workers at the plant not to report to work on Friday, Ford spokeswoman Jennifer Enoch said.

Even Fain has called the union's demands audacious, but he says the automakers are raking in billions and can afford them. He scoffs at company claims that costly settlements would force them to raise vehicle prices, saying labor accounts for only 4% to 5% of vehicle costs.

In addition to the wage increases, union negotiators are also seeking: restoration of cost-of-living pay raises; an end to varying tiers of wages for factory jobs; a 32-hour week with 40 hours of pay; the restoration of traditional defined-benefit pensions for new hires who now receive only 401(k)-style retirement plans; and pension increases for retirees, among other items.

Starting in 2007, workers gave up cost-of-living raises and defined benefit pensions for new hires. Wage tiers were created as the UAW tried to help the companies avoid financial trouble ahead of and during the Great Recession. Even so, only Ford avoided bankruptcy protection.

Many say it's time to get the concessions back because the companies are making huge profits and CEOs pay packages are soaring.

Looming in the background is the historic transition to electric vehicles. The union wants to make sure it represents workers at joint-venture electric vehicle battery factories the companies are building so that members have jobs making vehicles of the future.

Top-scale assembly plant workers make about \$32 per hour, plus large annual profit-sharing checks. Ford said average annual pay including overtime and bonuses was \$78,000 last year.

The Ford plant that's on strike employs about 3,300 workers. The Toledo Jeep complex has about 5,800 workers, and GM's Wentzville plant has about 3,600 workers.

The union didn't go after the companies' big cash cows, which are full-size pickup trucks and big SUVs.

Automakers say they're facing unprecedented demands as they develop and build new electric vehicles while at the same time making gas-powered cars, SUVs and trucks to pay the bills. They're worried labor costs will rise so much that they'll have to price their cars above those sold by foreign automakers with U.S. factories.

Seewer reported from Toledo, Ohio, while Householder reported from Wayne, Michigan.

Kansas will no longer change trans people's birth certificates to reflect their gender identities

By JOHN HANNA and HEATHER HOLLINGSWORTH Associated Press

TOPEKA, Kan. (AP) — Kansas will no longer change transgender people's birth certificates to reflect their gender identities, the state health department said Friday, citing a new law that prevents the state from legally recognizing those identities.

The decision from the state Department of Health and Environment makes Kansas one of a handful of states that won't change transgender people's birth certificates. It already was among the few states that don't change the gender marker on transgender people's driver's licenses.

Those decisions reverse policies that Democratic Gov. Laura Kelly's administration set when she took office in 2019. They came in response to court filings by conservative Republican state Attorney General Kris Kobach to enforce the new state law. Enacted by the GOP-controlled Legislature over Kelly's veto, it took effect July 1 and defines male and female based only on the sex assigned to a person at birth.

Jaelynn Abegg, a 38-year-old Wichita resident, said her heart breaks for fellow transgender Kansas residents who won't be able to experience the joy she felt when her new birth certificate, affirming her female identity, arrived in the mail in 2021. She said the change gave her "a feeling completeness."

"This is something that I've been grappling with my entire life. As far back as I can remember, I have wished that I was that I was a woman," Abegg said. "And being able to embrace that and take that for myself has been life changing."

Transgender Kansas residents also have said repeatedly in interviews that having ID documents that conflict with their identities makes traveling by airplane, interacting with police and even using a credit card in stores more complicated. Also, studies show that transgender people who don't have their identities

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affirmed, especially youth, generally are more prone to depression and at a higher risk of suicide.

Kobach publicly chastised Kelly when she initially said that her administration could continue to change transgender people's birth certificates and driver's licenses despite the new law. He said it was her duty to administer the law even though she opposes it.

Kelly said in a statement Friday: "As I've said before, the state should not discriminate or encroach into Kansans' personal lives — it's wrong, it's bad for business."

She added: "However, I am committed to following the law."

Omar Gonzalez-Pagan, an attorney for Lambda Legal, which represents LGBTQ+ people in lawsuits, said Kelly's administration was forced to act as it did, though he expects the courts to find the law unconstitutional.

"People with a myopic view or a misunderstanding or misapprehension about trans people want to ensure that trans people are not seen by government and the world at large," he said.

Kobach and other supporters of the new law have argued that a birth certificate is a record of a historical event and therefore shouldn't change even when a person's gender identity does. Also, some supporters of the law have acknowledged that they don't see transgender girls and women as girls and women.

Kobach said Friday he is pleased that Kelly's administration is complying with the new law, adding in a statement, "The intent of Kansas legislators was clear."

The new Kansas law was based on a proposal from several national anti-trans groups and part of a wave of measures rolling back transgender rights in Republican-controlled statehouses across the U.S. Montana, Oklahoma and Tennessee also don't allow transgender residents to change their birth certificates, and Montana and Tennessee don't allow driver's licenses changes.

From 2019 through June 2023, more than 900 Kansas residents changed the gender markers on their birth certificates and nearly 400 changed their driver's licenses. Both documents list a person's "sex."

Kobach issued a legal opinion in late June saying that not only does the new law prevent such changes, it requires the state to reverse previous changes to its records. The Department of Health and Environment said Friday a transgender person can keep a changed birth certificate and it remains valid, but if another copy is issued in the future, it will revert to listing the sex assigned at birth.

For weeks before the new law took effect, LGBTQ-rights advocates urged trans people to change their driver's licenses and birth certificates before it took effect. Requests for changes surged in the weeks before the law took effect.

Under the conservative Republicans who were governor before Kelly, transgender residents also couldn't change their birth certificates.

Four transgender residents represented by Lambda Legal sued the state in 2018 over that policy, and months after taking office, Kelly settled that lawsuit. A federal judge signed off on a settlement agreement requiring the state to change transgender people's birth certificates.

In late June, Kobach filed a request with the same federal judge, asking him to lift the requirement because it conflicted with the new state law. The judge granted the request last month, saying he was leaving it to Kansas courts to determine how the law must be enforced.

Kobach also filed a separate state-court lawsuit in July to prevent transgender people from changing their driver's licenses. A state district court judge ordered that such changes cease, at least through early January.

In that state-court case, five transgender people argue that the new law violates their rights under the Kansas Constitution.

That issue appears likely to go to the Kansas Supreme Court, which ruled in 2019 that the state's Bill of Rights grants people a right to bodily autonomy.

The American Civil Liberties Union of Kansas has set up a website for people to report that they've been harmed by the new state law rolling back trans rights.

"Accurate, affirming identity documents are crucial for the health, safety, and well-being of trans people," said D.C. Heigert, LGBTQ+ legal fellow for the group.

Hollingsworth reported from Mission, Kansas.

Follow John Hanna on the X platform: <https://twitter.com/apjdhanna>

For more AP coverage of Kansas politics: <https://apnews.com/hub/kansas-state-government>

New Mexico governor amends order suspending right to carry firearms to focus on parks, playgrounds

By MORGAN LEE Associated Press

SANTA FE, N.M. (AP) — New Mexico Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham on Friday narrowed an order that broadly suspended the right to carry firearms in and around Albuquerque to apply only to public parks and playgrounds where children and their families gather.

The governor's announcement came days after a federal judge blocked part of the order with criticism mounting over the Democratic governor's action and legal challenges by gun-rights advocates.

Gunfire and violent crime in Albuquerque have continued unabated in the week since Lujan Grisham issued the temporary public health order, she said at a news conference Friday, adding that she will continue to pursue a "framework that will pass legal muster" to rein in gun violence.

"Last night, we saw violent crime move through the city that resulted in a gun injury, two car hijackings and a kidnapping with suspects not yet in custody," said Lujan Grisham, appearing in Albuquerque alongside leading Democratic state legislators and her administration's secretary of public safety. "We have a very serious situation in our communities that requires serious, immediate results."

She said the temporary order "is amended to be focused now (on) no open or concealed carry in public parks or playgrounds, where we know we've got high risk of kids and families."

Amended restrictions on firearms do not apply to parklands overseen by the State Land Office and the state parks division of the Energy, Minerals and Natural Resources Department, the governor's office said. The agencies oversee dozens of recreation areas, from a nature center in Albuquerque to remote mountain and lakeside campgrounds.

U.S. District Judge David Urias said Wednesday that the governor's original order was likely to cause irreparable harm to people deprived of the right to carry a gun in public for self-defense, granting a temporary restraining order to block the suspension of gun rights until another hearing is held in early October. Further deliberations are scheduled in U.S. District for early October.

Lujan Grisham chose not to repeal gun restrictions entirely, noted Hannah Hill, executive director of the National Foundation for Gun Rights, which is challenging the order in federal court.

But the governor "is still trying to suspend public carry by executive order, and this should not be seen as a good-faith attempt to comply with the court's restraining order," Hill said in an email.

At least a half dozen lawsuits are challenging provisions of the governor's original order, including a petition to the New Mexico Supreme Court filed Thursday jointly by Republican state legislators, the state Republican Party and the National Rifle Association.

Republican state Rep. Randall Pettigrew of Lovington said he's still committed to that legal challenge aimed at defending gun rights, accusing the governor of a deliberate "attack on the Constitution."

"This is them trying to figure out how far they can take a public health order," said Pettigrew, a plaintiff to the challenge in state court. "I'm not going to stop. I can't, my constituents won't let me and I don't believe we should" end litigation.

Earlier in the week, scores of demonstrators defiantly wore holstered handguns on their hips or carried rifles during a rally by gun-rights advocates.

The second-term governor on Sept. 8 imposed the emergency public health order that suspended the right to openly carry or conceal guns in public places based on a statistical threshold for violent crime in Albuquerque and the surrounding area. She cited recent shootings around the state that left children dead,

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saying something needed to be done.

Republican lawmakers threatened impeachment proceedings and even some influential Democrats and civil rights leaders warned that the move could do more harm than good to overall efforts to ease gun violence.

State Attorney General Raúl Torrez announced he could not defend the 30-day prohibition against carrying firearms in and around Albuquerque, widening the divide between the state's top-ranked elected Democrats.

Lujan Grisham said Friday that legal proceedings affirmed her calls for urgent action to stem gun violence. "There was no disagreement in that courtroom that gun violence is a problem," she said.

The governor was accompanied at Friday's news conference by legislators including House Speaker Javier Martínez of Albuquerque, one of four local lawmakers whose homes were targeted in drive-by style shootings in December 2022 and January of this year. Martínez spoke in general terms about the Legislature's commitment to combating crime and its root causes.

The local Catholic archbishop has been among the few joining longtime gun-control advocates in support of the order.

New Mexico is an open carry state, so the governor's order affects anyone in Bernalillo County who can legally own a gun, with some exceptions. Bernalillo is the state's most populous county and home to Albuquerque.

This version corrects the description of a judge's order that found gun restrictions would likely cause irreparable harm. The judge did not rule the order unconstitutional.

Baby dies at day care in New York City, 3 other children hospitalized

NEW YORK (AP) — A 1-year-old boy died and 3 other children were hospitalized after emergency workers responded to a report of cardiac arrest at a day care center in New York City on Friday, authorities said.

Police said the incident was reported around 2:40 p.m. at a day care facility in the Bronx. The exact cause is still under investigation.

The 1-year-old boy was pronounced dead. Two 2-year-old boys and a baby girl remain hospitalized.

Oregon launches legal psilocybin access amid high demand and hopes for improved mental health care

By ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

EUGENE, Ore. (AP) — Psilocybin tea, wind chimes and a tie-dye mattress await those coming to an office suite in Eugene to trip on psychedelic mushrooms. For roughly six hours, adults over 21 can experience what many users describe as vivid geometric shapes, a loss of identity and a oneness with the universe.

Epic Healing Eugene — America's first licensed psilocybin service center — opened in June, marking Oregon's unprecedented step in offering the mind-bending drug to the public. The center now has a waitlist of more than 3,000 names, including people with depression, PTSD or end-of-life dread.

No prescription or referral is needed, but proponents hope Oregon's legalization will spark a revolution in mental health care.

Colorado voters last year passed a measure allowing regulated use of psychedelic mushrooms starting in 2024, and California's Legislature this month approved a measure that would allow possession and use of certain plant- and mushroom-based psychedelics, including psilocybin and mescaline, with plans for health officials to develop guidelines for therapeutic use.

The Oregon Psilocybin Services Section, charged with regulating the state's industry, has received "hundreds of thousands of inquiries from all over the world," Angela Allbee, the agency's manager, said in an interview.

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"So far, what we're hearing is that clients have had positive experiences," she said.

While psilocybin remains illegal in most of the United States, the Food and Drug Administration in 2018 designated it a "breakthrough therapy." This summer, the FDA published draft guidance for researchers designing clinical trials for psychedelic drugs.

Researchers believe psilocybin changes the way the brain organizes itself, helping a user adopt new attitudes and overcome mental health issues.

The Oregon Psychiatric Physicians Association, however, opposed Oregon's 2020 ballot measure legalizing psilocybin, saying it "is unsafe and makes misleading promises to those Oregonians who are struggling with mental illness."

Allbee noted that psychedelic mushrooms have been a part of tribal spiritual and healing practices for thousands of years. Her agency is focused on safety, she said.

First, customers must have a preparation session with a licensed facilitator who stays with clients as they experience the drug. The facilitator can deny access to those who have active psychosis, thoughts of harming anyone, or who have taken lithium, which is used to treat mania, in the past month.

The clients can't buy mushrooms to go, and they must stay at the service center until the drug wears off.

Besides approving psilocybin, Oregon voters in 2020 decriminalized possession of hard drugs, cementing the state's reputation as a leader in drug-law reform. Oregon was the first state to decriminalize marijuana possession and one of the first to legalize its recreational use.

But these days, the regulated marijuana industry is struggling with massive oversupply. And drug decriminalization has not greatly expanded addiction treatment or reduced overdoses as hoped. According to AP VoteCast, 58% of Oregon voters in the 2022 midterm elections thought Oregon's drug decriminalization effort had been a bad thing.

It's too early to assess Oregon's mushroom legalization.

Oregon Psilocybin Services spent two years establishing regulations and began accepting license applications in January. There are now 10 licensed service centers, four growers, two testing labs and dozens of facilitators.

While Epic Healing Eugene has a long waitlist thanks in part to early media attention, other service centers say business is picking up as awareness spreads.

Omnia Group Ashland, which opened this month in southern Oregon, has a prospective client list of 150, said co-founder Brian Lindley. Jeanette Small, the owner of Lucid Cradle in Bend, said she intends to see only one client per week to give close attention to each and is already booked through December.

The law allows local jurisdictions to ban psilocybin operations, and several rural counties have done so.

There are complaints the cost is too high, but those in the industry expect prices to fall as more businesses are established. A client can wind up paying over \$2,000, which helps cover service center expenses, a facilitator and lab-tested psilocybin. Annual licenses for service centers and growers cost \$10,000, with a half-price discount for veterans.

Allbee said her agency requires every licensee to work toward social equity goals, with some already providing sliding-scale price models. She expects Oregon's psilocybin program, currently receiving millions in taxpayer dollars, to be fully supported by licensing fees by mid-2025. She promised to then boost efforts to lower prices.

Cathy Jonas, Epic Healing Eugene's owner, said she doesn't expect her service center to start making money for a while. Providing legal access to psychedelic mushrooms is a calling, she said: "The plant medicines have communicated to me that I'm supposed to be doing this thing."

State regulations allow doses of up to 50 milligrams, but when Jonas tested a 35-milligram sample of pure psilocybin — typically equal to about 6 grams of dried mushrooms — she found it so powerful that she decided it would be the most her facility would offer.

One of Jonas' first clients took 35 milligrams and described seeing a "kind of infinite-dimension fractal that just kept turning and twisting."

"It was kind of mesmerizing to watch, but it got so intense," said the client, who didn't want to be identified to protect his privacy. "I started to have this experience of dying and being reborn. And then I would

kind of see large portions of my life going by in a very rapid way.”

He said the session “was not particularly pleasant,” but that it beneficially transformed how he views painful memories and provided a sought-after mystical experience.

Licensed grower Gared Hansen has come full circle from the 16 years he spent as a police officer in San Francisco. He once busted a psilocybin dealer in Golden Gate Park.

Today, he runs Uptown Fungus, a one-person psilocybin-growing operation in a nondescript building set among towering cedar trees near Springfield, Oregon. He tends mushroom varieties with names like Golden Teacher, Blue Meanies and Pink Buffalo. A 25-milligram dose costs \$125.

Hansen said he sometimes meditates with the mushrooms, hoping to imbue them with healing energy.

Little, brown psychedelic mushrooms can be found growing in fields or in the woods, but they can closely resemble poisonous varieties. Hansen and others caution against obtaining psilocybin cheaper on the black market or tripping alone. Service centers provide measured — and often strong — doses in a controlled environment.

“Sometimes part of the healing could be a negative experience someone has to go through, to kind of flush negative emotions out or reexperience some trauma in a healthier way,” Hansen said. “I’d hate to have someone that’s never tried it before take it home, have a bad trip and hurt themselves.”

Colombian painter and sculptor Fernando Botero, known for his inflated forms, has died at age 91

By MANUEL RUEDA Associated Press

BOGOTA, Colombia (AP) — Renowned Colombian painter and sculptor Fernando Botero, whose depictions of people and objects in plump, exaggerated forms became emblems of Colombian art around the world, has died. He was 91.

Lina Botero told the Colombian radio station Caracol that her father died Friday morning in Monaco of pneumonia complications.

Botero depicted politicians, animals, saints, and scenes from his childhood in an inflated and colorful form that was instantly recognizable. During his lifetime the artist attained global fame and influence, despite his humble origins, and his paintings were exhibited in museums globally, while his imposing bronze sculptures can be found in the parks and avenues of many European and Latin American capitals.

“His success was truly immense” Botero’s son Juan Carlos, wrote in a biography of his father, published in 2010. “Fernando Botero has created a unique style, that is original and easy to recognize.”

Botero’s paintings fetched millions of dollars at international auctions, and the artist was highly esteemed in his native Colombia, not just because of his success abroad, but due to the generous donations he made to his home country, including 23 statues, that are now in a park in downtown Medellin, and have become one of the city’s most visited attractions.

Botero also donated 180 paintings to Colombia’s Central Bank which were used to create the Botero Museum in Bogota. His sculpture of a white, chubby pigeon, standing proudly on a pedestal became an emblem of Colombia’s efforts to make peace with rebel groups and is currently placed in a prominent gallery inside the nation’s presidential palace.

Many Colombians appreciated Botero’s art because it evokes nostalgia for the country as it was in the early 20th century. His characters wear bowler hats, and sport neatly trimmed mustaches. They move around in a colorful universe of green hills and lush trees, where homes are made with clay roof tiles.

“The painter of our traditions and our defects, the painter of our virtues has died,” President Gustavo Petro wrote on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter, on Friday. “He painted violence and peace. He painted the pigeon that was rejected one thousand times, and put one thousand times on a throne.”

Botero was born on April 19, 1932 in Medellin, Colombia. As a child he was enrolled by an uncle in a bullfighting school that he soon left, but it was a world captured later in his paintings. Botero decided at age 14 to dedicate his life to the arts, after managing to sell some sketches of bullfights to fans outside the city’s bullfighting arena. His mother supported the decision, but told him he would have to pay for

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his studies.

As a teenager, Botero participated in a group exhibition in Bogota, and had his first individual exhibition there in 1951. In the following year, he went to Madrid to study at the Royal Academy of Fine Arts of San Fernando.

From Europe, he traveled to Mexico to study the work of Diego Rivera and José Clemente Orozco.

During his travels, Botero married Gloria Zea, with whom he had three children, Fernando, Lina and Juan Carlos. Returning to Bogotá in 1958, he was appointed professor at the School of Arts of the National University. He later divorced and took up residence in New York in 1960, where he arrived with just a few hundred dollars in his pocket.

In the 1960s Botero began experimenting with the volume of objects and people in his paintings. His original and plump creations attracted the attention of art critics and, by then, the painter had created hundreds of drawings as well as some 1,000 paintings.

Botero remarried in 1964 with Cecilia Zambrano, who he also later divorced. In 1970 they had a son, Pedro, who died four years later in a car accident in Spain. Botero captured the pain of his son's death in the painting "Pedrito" that depicts his son riding a toy horse and wearing a blue police officer's uniform. He also donated 16 works to the Museum of Antioquia, in Medellín, to honor the boy and in turn the museum named a room in memory of "Pedrito Botero."

In the 1970s, Botero put aside painting and began to experiment with sculptures in bronze, marble and cast iron, which brought him great success. In 1978 Botero returned to painting, and then alternated between the two disciplines.

In his paintings, the artists depicted scenes of daily life, such as a family picnic or a party in an early 20th century ballroom. But he also tackled political subjects, like the death of drug dealer Pablo Escobar, or the emergence of rebel groups.

In 1995, his bronze sculpture "The Bird," weighing more than 1.8 tons and displayed in a park in Medellín, was dynamited by unknown attackers, causing the death of 22 people and injuring more than 200.

In 2005, Botero created a series of 79 paintings that depicted U.S. soldiers torturing Iraqis at the infamous Abu Ghraib prison in Baghdad, just a year after the incident came to light. The artist struggled to get the paintings shown in U.S. museums, but they were eventually exhibited at the University of California Berkeley, which still houses some of the paintings.

"I was moved by the hypocrisy of the situation" Botero said of his Abu Ghraib series in a 2007 interview with *Semana Magazine*. "A country that presents itself to the world as a model of compassion and as a defender of human rights, ended up torturing people in the same prison where Saddam Hussein tortured people."

Botero said he would paint every day from morning until night, and in absolute silence, so as not to allow anything to distract him.

"Fernando Botero is one of the most disciplined people you can meet. His friends and family affirm that he works every day of every year. For Botero there are no rest dates, no holidays, no weekends," his son, Juan Carlos Botero, wrote in his book. At Christmas, "he is painting. On his birthday, he is painting. On New Year's, he is painting."

His daughter, Lina, told Colombian radio station Blu on Friday that Botero had been working at his studio in Monaco regularly, until last weekend. "He couldn't work on oil paintings" she explained, because he was too weak to stand and hold larger brushes. "But he was experimenting with water paintings."

History suggests 0-2 start is too difficult to overcome in the NFL

By ROB MAADDI AP Pro Football Writer

PHILADELPHIA (AP) — Two losses in five days already puts the Minnesota Vikings in a big hole that's been difficult for NFL teams to overcome.

Since 1990, only 31 of the 270 clubs (11.5%) that began a season 0-2 advanced to the playoffs. The Cincinnati Bengals recovered from losing their first two games last season to finish 12-4 and reach the

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AFC championship game.

The Vikings have to buck the losing trend after another sloppy effort in a 34-28 loss to the Philadelphia Eagles on Thursday night. They had four costly fumbles, including Justin Jefferson losing the ball out of bounds in the end zone. That followed up a mistake-filled 20-17 loss at home to Tampa Bay in Week 1.

"Shot ourselves in the foot with the turnovers," quarterback Kirk Cousins said. "Similar story now the first two weeks in that case. ... Just difficult to win in this league when you lose the turnover battle by one, let alone by the margin we have lost it by, so we have to fix those mistakes and not let it continue."

Six other 2022 playoff teams are in danger of starting 0-2, including the AFC's top three teams last year. The Kansas City Chiefs, Bengals and Buffalo Bills each lost their season opener. So did the Los Angeles Chargers, New York Giants and Seattle Seahawks.

Only the 1993 Dallas Cowboys, 2001 New England Patriots and 2007 Giants won a Super Bowl after starting 0-2.

"It doesn't feel good. You want to win," two-time Super Bowl MVP Patrick Mahomes said. "Obviously, I'll be motivated as much as I always am, and that's to go out there and win the week and it's a great opportunity to go up against a great football team, so I'm excited for it."

Mahomes and the Chiefs visit the Jacksonville Jaguars in a playoff rematch, so they've got a tough battle ahead. Seeing other playoff teams lose early is no comfort to Mahomes.

"I mean, not really. You never know what's going to happen in this league," he said. "People lose every week. It's parity. That's what this NFL is about, and everybody can beat everybody. You have to come in with the mentality that you're going to play your best football. I thought we lapsed in that this last week, and we were playing a good football team and they beat us."

"I don't worry about those other teams around the league because you never know who's going to be at the top at the end of the year whenever you are trying to find your seeding. You just try to go out there and be the best you can be and stack as many wins as possible."

Geno Smith and the Seahawks also have a major challenge trying to avoid 0-2. They visit the Detroit Lions, who upset the Chiefs in the NFL opener on Sept. 7.

"It's good. 0-1 is not the way we wanted to start but no one is hanging their head," Smith said. "Everyone is looking at ways to improve and really looking forward to going on the road in a tough environment and going out there and trying to get a win. I think everyone is really focused, has a huge sense of urgency, and we've been practicing like it."

Joe Burrow and the Bengals face the Baltimore Ravens at home on Sunday after a woeful performance in a 24-3 loss at Cleveland. They likely won't panic if they lose because they know what it takes to rebound from 0-2.

The Bills host the Las Vegas Raiders after a frustrating overtime loss to the New York Jets, who lost Aaron Rodgers on his fourth play with an Achilles tendon injury. Bills quarterback Josh Allen had four turnovers in that one.

In the competitive AFC East, 0-2 wouldn't be an ideal way for a team with Super Bowl or bust expectations to kick off its season.

"Excited to get back out on the field and wash that taste out of my mouth," Allen said.

The Chargers visit the Titans. Both teams lost, so one of them will be 0-2 unless they tie.

"You have to face the tough losses in the NFL when they happen, and you have to learn from them quickly," Chargers coach Brandon Staley said.

The Giants visit the Arizona Cardinals, who also lost their opener but have zero playoff expectations in a rebuilding year.

Outrage boils in Seattle and in India over death of a student and an officer's callous remarks

By MANUEL VALDES and ANDREW SELSKY Associated Press

SEATTLE (AP) — Outrage grew Friday over a Seattle police officer's remark that the life of a young woman killed by a speeding patrol car had "limited value." Diplomats from India are asking for an investigation following the death of the Indian graduate student as people in Seattle protested the officer's callous jokes caught on bodycam video.

The footage released this week shows Officer Daniel Auderer, vice president of the Seattle Police Officers Guild, joking with the rank-and-file police union's president after a different officer's speeding police car on Jan. 23 slammed into Jaahnavi Kandula at a crosswalk.

Protesters on Thursday evening gathered at the Seattle intersection where the 23-year-old graduate student was fatally struck by Officer Kevin Dave's SUV. The King County Prosecuting Attorney's Office is conducting a criminal review of the crash.

Auderer responded to the crash to evaluate whether Dave was impaired, The Seattle Times reported. Dave had been driving 74 mph (119 kph) in a 25 mph (40 kph) zone on the way to an overdose call.

Later, Auderer left his body-worn camera on as he called Seattle Police Officers Guild President Mike Solan to report what happened. In a recording released by the police department on Monday, Auderer laughs and suggests Kandula's life had "limited value" and the city should just write a check for \$11,000.

At the demonstration on Thursday, 5-year-old Layla Allibhai sat atop father Mo Allibhai's shoulders while holding a sign saying: "I have unlimited value. So did Jaahnavi."

Protesters also carried signs saying "Jail killer cops" and "Convict Kevin Dave."

"I think this has galvanized people because it's so blatant and disrespectful to put a value on a human's life at \$11,000," Patricia Hunter, co-chair of the Community Police Commission, said in an interview Friday. "And it galvanizes people to see that the culture at Seattle Police Department has some issues that need to be immediately addressed."

Hunter's commission was formed to hold police accountable, along with the Office of the Inspector General and the Office of Police Accountability. Hunter said its next step is to work with those partners to see what charges might be brought in the case, what policies might have been broken and "to amplify the voices of the community which are enraged over this video, so that justice can be done."

The Consulate General of India in San Francisco tweeted that it has taken the "deeply troubling" matter up with authorities in Seattle and in Washington, D.C., and that it wants a thorough investigation and action against those involved. Newspapers in India have been following the case.

In a statement Friday, the U.S. State Department called the situation disturbing.

"We are aware of, and are disturbed by, what was said about Ms. Kandula's death in the bodycam footage recently released by the Seattle Police Department," the State Department said. "We would like to take this opportunity to express our sincere condolence to Ms. Kandula's family and loved ones."

The Seattle Police Officers Guild said in a statement Friday that it understands the outrage caused by the "highly insensitive comments."

"It sullens the profession of law enforcement, the reputation of all Seattle Police officers and paints Seattle in a terrible light," the union said. "We feel deep sorrow and grief for the family of Jaahnavi Kandula as this video has revictimized them in an already tragic situation as they continue to mourn her death. We are truly sorry."

But the union noted that the bodycam footage captures only Auderer's side of the conversation: "There is much more detail and nuance that has not been made public yet."

Solan, who had been on the other end of the call with Auderer, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Friday.

Auderer, in an Aug. 8 statement he provided to the Office of Police Accountability that the union released Friday, said Solan had lamented the death and that his own comments were intended to mimic how the

city's attorneys might try to minimize liability for it.

"I laughed at the ridiculousness of how these incidents are litigated and the ridiculousness of how I watched these incidents play out as two parties bargain over a tragedy," Auderer wrote. "I understand that without context the comment could be interpreted as horrifying and crude."

He denied that his remarks were "made with malice or a hard heart."

Kandula was from Andhra Pradesh, a state in India's southern coastal region. Relatives told The Seattle Times that Kandula came to Seattle so she could one day support her mother back home in India. Kandula was on track to receive a master's in information systems this December from the Seattle campus of Northeastern University.

Selsky reported from Salem, Oregon. Lindsey Wasson in Seattle and Matthew Lee in Washington, DC, contributed to this report.

US military orders new interviews on the deadly 2021 Afghan airport attack as criticism persists

By LOLITA C. BALDOR Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — The Pentagon's Central Command has ordered interviews of roughly two dozen more service members who were at the Kabul airport when suicide bombers attacked during U.S. forces' chaotic Afghanistan withdrawal, as criticism persists that the deadly assault could have been stopped.

The interviews, ordered by Gen. Erik Kurilla, head of U.S. Central Command, were triggered in part by assertions by at least one service member injured in the blast who said he was never interviewed about it and that he might have been able to stop the attackers.

The interviews are meant to see if service members who were not included in the original investigation, have new or different information.

The decision, according to officials, does not reopen the administration's investigation into the deadly bombing and the withdrawal two years ago. But the additional interviews will likely be seized on by congressional critics, mostly Republican, as proof that the administration bungled the probe into the attack, in addition to mishandling the withdrawal.

Some families of those killed and injured have complained that the Pentagon hasn't been transparent enough about the bombing that killed 170 Afghans and 13 U.S. servicemen and women.

U.S. Central Command's investigation concluded in November 2021 that given the worsening security situation at the airport's Abbey Gate as Afghans became increasingly desperate to flee, "the attack was not preventable at the tactical level without degrading the mission to maximize the number of evacuees." And, the Pentagon has said that the review of the suicide attack had turned up neither any advance identification of a possible attacker nor any requests for "an escalation to existing rules of engagement" governing use of force by U.S. troops.

Central Command plans to speak with a number of service members who were severely wounded in the bombing at the Abbey Gate and had to be quickly evacuated from the country for medical care. They represent the bulk of the planned interviews, but a few others who weren't wounded are also included. Officials also did not rule out that the number of interviews could grow as a result of those initial conversations.

"The purpose of these interviews is to ensure we do our due diligence with the new information that has come to light, that the relevant voices are fully heard and that we take those accounts and examine them seriously and thoroughly so the facts are laid bare," Central Command spokesperson Michael Lawhorn said in a statement.

Officials on Friday began informing family members of those killed in the bombing as well as members of Congress about the latest plan. Lt. Gen. Patrick Frank, head of Army Central Command, is overseeing the team conducting the interviews, which is led by Army Brig. Gen. Lance Curtis. Gen. Kurilla has asked Frank to provide an update in 90 days.

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In emotional testimony during a congressional hearing in March, former Marine Sgt. Tyler Vargas-Andrews told lawmakers that he was thwarted in an attempt to stop the suicide bombing. He said Marines and others aiding in the evacuation operation were given descriptions of men believed to be plotting an attack before it occurred.

He said he and others spotted two men matching the descriptions and behaving suspiciously, and eventually had them in their rifle scopes, but never received a response about whether to take action.

"No one was held accountable," Vargas-Andrews told Rep. Mike McCaul, R-Texas, the chairman of the House Foreign Affairs Committee. "No one was, and no one is, to this day."

The March hearing was set up to examine the Biden administration's handling of the withdrawal. Taliban forces seized the Afghan capital, Kabul, far more rapidly than U.S. intelligence had foreseen as American forces pulled out. Kabul's fall turned the West's withdrawal into a frenzy, putting the airport at the center of a desperate air evacuation by U.S. troops.

In April, President Joe Biden's administration laid blame on his predecessor, President Donald Trump, for the deadly withdrawal. A 12-page summary of the results of the "hotwash" of U.S. policies around the ending of the nation's longest war asserts that Biden was "severely constrained" by Trump's decisions.

It acknowledges that the evacuation of Americans and allies from Afghanistan should have started sooner, but blames the delays on the Afghan government and military, and on U.S. military and intelligence community assessments.

The administration has refused to release detailed reviews conducted by the State Department and the Pentagon, saying they are highly classified.

The White House summary says that when Biden entered office, "the Taliban were in the strongest military position that they had been in since 2001, controlling or contesting nearly half of the country."

A review by U.S. Inspector-General for Afghanistan John Sopko concluded that actions taken by both the Trump and Biden administrations were key to the sudden collapse of the Afghan government and military, before U.S. forces completed their withdrawal in August 2021.

That includes Trump's one-sided withdrawal deal with the Taliban, and the abruptness of Biden's pullout of both U.S. contractors and troops from Afghanistan, stranding an Afghan air force that previous administrations had failed to make self-supporting, the review concluded.

A Jan. 6 rioter was convicted and sentenced in secret. No one will say why

By ALANNA DURKIN RICHER and MICHAEL KUNZELMAN Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Hundreds of rioters have been charged, convicted and sentenced for joining the mob attack on the U.S. Capitol. Unlike their cases, Samuel Lazar's appears to have been resolved in secret — kept under seal with no explanation, even after his release from prison.

Lazar, 37, of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, was arrested in July 2021 on charges that he came to the Capitol on Jan. 6, 2021, dressed in tactical gear and protective goggles, and used chemical spray on officers who were desperately trying to beat back the angry Donald Trump supporters.

There is no public record of a conviction or a sentence in Lazar's court docket.

But the Bureau of Prisons told The Associated Press that the man was released from federal custody this week after completing a sentence for assaulting or resisting a federal officer. Lazar was sentenced in Washington's federal court on March 17 to 30 months in prison, according to the Bureau of Prisons, but there's no public record of such a hearing. He had been jailed since July 2021.

Questions about Lazar's case have been swirling for months, but the details of his conviction and sentence have not been previously reported.

The Justice Department has refused to say why the case remains under wraps, and attorneys for Lazar did not respond to multiple requests for comment from The Associated Press. The judge overseeing Lazar's case in May rejected a request from media outlets — including the AP — to release any sealed records that may exist.

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The case is raising concerns about transparency in the massive Jan. 6 investigation — the largest in Justice Department history. Court hearings and records — including sentencing hearings and plea agreements — are supposed to be open and available to the public and the press unless there's a compelling need for secrecy.

Lazar was transferred in July from FCI Fort Dix — a federal lockup in New Jersey — to "community confinement" overseen by the Bureau of Prisons, which means he was either in home confinement or a halfway house, according to a prisons system spokesperson.

A social media post from Lazar's sister that month shows Lazar standing outside waving an American flag with the caption: "Hallelujah Praise God free at last ... #walkingfree."

Secret plea hearings are not unheard of, though the records are often unsealed ahead of sentencing.

In an unrelated example, the guilty plea by George Papadopoulos, the former Trump campaign adviser who triggered the Russia influence investigation, was entered under seal and kept out of view for weeks — until special counsel Robert Mueller disclosed that Papadopoulos had admitted making false statements to the FBI. Subsequent proceedings, including his sentencing hearing, were matters of public record.

George Washington University criminal law professor Randall Eliason, who spent 12 years as a federal prosecutor in Washington, said he couldn't remember any case during his Justice Department tenure in which a sentencing hearing and sentence were placed under seal. Eliason said it's possible that "either there's some kind of security concern about him personally, or maybe more likely that he's cooperating in some respect that they don't want the people he's cooperating against to know about."

But many Jan. 6 defendants have cooperation deals with the government, and their cases haven't been resolved in secret. Defendants who agree to cooperate with prosecutors often get their sentencing hearings delayed until they finish cooperating.

"The fact that he also got sentenced, went to prison and is already out, that whole situation is just unusual," Eliason said.

Lazar is among more than 1,100 defendants charged with federal crimes related to the Jan. 6 attack. Outside the Capitol that day, Lazar was carrying a bullhorn and wearing ski goggles, a tactical vest with a radio attached and camouflage-style face paint.

Videos captured Lazar approaching police lines outside the Capitol and discharging an orange chemical irritant toward officers, an FBI agent said in a court filing. An officer's body camera showed Lazar retreat down steps after police deployed a chemical at him. Lazar then turned and sprayed two officers, according to the agent.

Lazar shouted profane insults at police through the bullhorn, calling them tyrants and yelling, "Let's get their guns!" Another video captured Lazar saying, "There's a time for peace and there's a time for war."

U.S. Magistrate Judge Robin Meriweather in Washington, D.C., ordered Lazar detained pending trial, ruling that he posed a threat to public safety. The magistrate noted that Lazar also had been photographed posing with firearms on a public street during an August 2020 rally.

In January 2022, a new indictment charged Lazar with five counts, including felony offenses. He pleaded not guilty to the charges the following month. In March 2022, prosecutors and Lazar's attorney asked for more time "to negotiate a disposition of the matter short of trial."

In June 2022, U.S. District Judge Amy Berman Jackson canceled a status conference for Lazar's case because he wasn't available to appear by video from jail. That's the last publicly available court filing to address the status of the case.

In April of this year, attorneys for a coalition of news outlets — including the AP — asked the judge to unseal any records related to a change of plea or sentencing hearing for Lazar, noting a March NBC News story — citing an anonymous source — that said Lazar was scheduled to be sentenced in a secret hearing.

"The public docket provides no explanation as to why, despite the strong presumption of transparency in this Circuit, these judicial records are not available to the public," the coalition lawyers wrote.

After Lazar's secret sentencing, his brother told Lancaster Online — which first reported his release from prison in July — that their mother was "even more confused," adding "she has no idea if and when he's

coming home, assuming he was actually given a sentence today.”

In May, Judge Jackson denied the news outlets’ request after a prosecutor and defense attorney argued against releasing the records, though she said the case law cited by the press coalition “plainly recognizes that there may be circumstances where a need for secrecy can be outweighed by competing significant interests.”

Jackson said there were no “undocketed” records in this or any other case pending before her, adding that “nothing has been sealed in this case without leave of court.” But the judge said the news outlets could renew their request, setting a Sept. 29 deadline for its lawyers to file “an updated status report setting forth their position or positions on this matter.”

Richer reported from Boston. Associated Press reporter Eric Tucker contributed from Washington.

Searchers look for more than 10,000 missing in flooded Libyan city where death toll eclipsed 11,000

By YOUSEF MOURAD Associated Press

DERNA, Libya (AP) — Libyan authorities limited access to the flooded city of Derna on Friday to make it easier for searchers to dig through the mud and hollowed-out buildings for the more than 10,000 people still missing and presumed dead following a disaster that has already claimed more than 11,000 lives.

The staggering death toll could grow further due to the spread of waterborne diseases and shifting of explosive ordnance that was swept up when two dams collapsed early Monday and sent a wall of water gushing through the city, officials warned.

The disaster has brought some rare unity to oil-rich Libya, which after years of war and civil strife is divided between rival governments in the country’s east and west that are backed by various militia forces and international patrons. But the opposing governments have struggled to respond to the crisis, and recovery efforts have been hampered by confusion, difficulty getting aid to the hardest-hit areas, and the destruction of Derna’s infrastructure, including several bridges.

Aid groups called on authorities to facilitate their access to the city so they can distribute badly needed food, clean water and medical supplies to survivors. Four days into the crisis, the lack of central oversight was apparent, with people receiving supplies and resources in some parts of Derna but being left to fend for themselves in others.

Manoelle Carton, the medical coordinator for Doctors Without Borders in Libya, described waiting in line for hours to get into the city and, once inside, finding volunteers from around the country who had flocked to Derna getting in the way of humanitarian workers at times.

“Everybody wants to help. But it is becoming chaotic,” she said. “There is an enormous need for coordination.”

Teams have buried bodies in mass graves outside the city and in nearby towns, Eastern Libya’s health minister, Othman Abduljaleel, said.

But officials worried that thousands more have yet to be found.

Bodies “are littering the streets, washing back up on shore and buried under collapsed buildings and debris,” said Bilal Sablough, regional forensics manager for Africa at the International Committee of the Red Cross.

“In just two hours, one of my colleagues counted over 200 bodies on the beach near Derna,” he said.

Divers are also searching the waters off the Mediterranean coastal city.

Carton said later Friday that most of the dead bodies had been cleared from the streets in the areas of the city the Doctors Without Borders team visited, but there were other grim signs, including that one of the three medical centers they went to was out of service “because almost all of the medical staff died.”

Thousands of people displaced by the flooding are staying in shelters or with friends or relatives, she said.

Adel Ayad, who survived the flood, recalled watching as the waters rose to the fourth floor of his building.

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"The waves swept people away from the tops of buildings, and we could see people carried by flood-water," he said. Among them were neighbors.

Salam al-Fergany, director general of the Ambulance and Emergency Service in eastern Libya, said late Thursday that residents would be evacuated from Derna and that only search-and-rescue teams would be allowed to enter. But there were no signs of such an evacuation on Friday.

Health officials warned that standing water opened the door to disease — but said there was no need to rush burials or put the dead in mass graves, as bodies usually do not pose a risk in such cases.

"You've got a lot of standing water. It doesn't mean the dead bodies pose a risk, but it does mean that the water itself is contaminated by everything," Dr. Margaret Harris, spokeswoman for the World Health Organization, told reporters in Geneva. "So you really have to focus on ensuring that people have access to safe water."

Imene Trabelsi, a spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross, warned that another danger lurked in the mud: landmines and other explosives left behind by the country's protracted conflict.

There are leftover explosives in Libya dating back to World War II, but most are from the civil conflict that began in 2011. Between 2011 and 2021, some 3,457 people were killed or wounded by landmines or other leftover explosive ordnance in Libya, according to the international Landmine and Cluster Munition Monitor.

Even before the flooding, Trabelsi said the ability to detect and remove mines from areas was limited. After the floods, she said, explosive devices may have been swept to "new, undetected areas" where they could pose an immediate threat to search teams and a longer-term threat to civilians.

Carton echoed the concerns about an outbreak of water-related diseases in the city. Beyond that, she said, there is a "huge need in mental health support" among survivors, witnesses and medical workers.

According to the Libyan Red Crescent, there were 11,300 flooding deaths in Derna as of Thursday. Another 10,100 people were reported missing, though there was little hope many of them would be found alive, the aid group said. The storm also killed about 170 people elsewhere in the country.

Libyan media reported that dozens of Sudanese migrants were killed in the disaster. The country has become a major transit point for Middle Eastern and African migrants fleeing conflict and poverty to seek a better life in Europe.

Flooding often happens in Libya during the rainy season, but rarely with this much destruction. Scientists said the storm bore some of the hallmarks of climate change, and extremely warm sea water could have given the storm more energy and allowed it to move more slowly.

Officials have said that Libya's political chaos also contributed to the loss of life. Khalifa Othman, a Derna resident, said he blamed authorities for the extent of the disaster.

"My son, a doctor who graduated this year, my nephew and all his family, my grandchild, my daughter and her husband are all missing, and we are still searching for them," Othman said. "All the people are upset and angry — there was no preparedness."

This story was updated to correct that there were no signs that an evacuation had begun on Friday.

Associated Press journalists Samy Magdy in Cairo, Jack Jeffery in London, Jamey Keaten in Geneva and Abby Sewell in Beirut contributed to this report.

Ukrainian troops reclaim a village near Bakhmut. It's a small win in a churning counteroffensive

By SAMYA KULLAB Associated Press

KYIV, Ukraine (AP) — Ukrainian forces recaptured a war-ravaged settlement in the country's embattled east, Kyiv's military leaders said Friday, a small territorial win in a churning counteroffensive marked so far by small victories but no major breakthroughs.

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The taking of the village of Andriivka, 10 kilometers (6 miles) south of Russian-occupied city of Bakhmut, underscores just how difficult Ukraine's multipronged counteroffensive is shaping up to be.

In the east and the south, Ukraine is reporting minimal territorial gains after months of intense fighting and heavy losses. Despite being bolstered by NATO-standard weapons worth billions of dollars, Ukrainian military officials have said there are no quick solutions to puncture Russian defensive lines — only slow, grinding battles.

Ukraine's strategy appears to be to spread Russian forces thin across multiple directions along the front line, from vast agricultural tracts in the east to the Dnieper River, which marks the line of contact in the south, in hopes that Ukrainian troops can exploit their opponents' vulnerabilities.

The wet weather of fall and winter will likely slow Ukrainian advances. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy is expected to visit Washington next week as Congress debates approving more aid.

In the northeast, Russian forces are staging their own offensive, seeking to pin Ukrainian forces and distract them from fighting elsewhere.

Three months of intense fighting finally wore down Russian forces in Andriivka, a tiny patch along the sprawling front, allowing Ukraine's 3rd Assault Brigade to make a lightning move to encircle Russian forces.

The recapture of Andriivka comes weeks after an important tactical victory for Ukrainian forces in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, where they punctured through Russia's first line of defense and took back the village of Robotyne.

The win, announced in late August, came after Ukrainian forces advanced just 7 kilometers (about 4 miles) after intense fighting that started in June.

The General Staff of Ukraine's armed forces announced the reclaiming of Andriivka early Friday. There was no confirmation or comment from Russia authorities.

The 3rd Assault Brigade said it took Andriivka after surrounding the Russian garrison in the village during what it described as a "lightning operation" and destroying it over two days. It called the success a breakthrough on the southern flank of Bakhmut and "key to success in all further directions."

At best, the recapture of Andriivka, which had a prewar population of under 100, allows Ukrainian forces to maneuver with greater ease around Bakhmut, a city known for salt mining that is now in complete ruins.

The eight months of fighting for control of Bakhmut comprised the longest and likely bloodiest battle of the war, which began in February 2022. Russian forces led by mercenaries from the Wagner Group captured Bakhmut in May.

The 3rd Assault Brigade initially contested a statement by Ukrainian Deputy Defense Minister Hanna Maliar that said Andriivka was reclaimed but confirmed early Friday that it had done so.

"It was difficult and yesterday's situation changed very dynamically several times," she said.

Maliar said Ukraine had regained 50 square kilometers (19 square miles) of land around Bakhmut since the start of the counteroffensive in June.

In late June, Wagner leader Yevgeny Prigozhin led his fighters from eastern Ukraine into Russia as part of a short-lived rebellion that represented the biggest challenge to President Vladimir Putin's more than two decades of rule. Two months later, Prigozhin and several of his top lieutenants died in a suspicious plane crash en route from Moscow to St. Petersburg.

Ukrainian forces are trying to envelop Bakhmut from the south and the north and have gained ground slowly in the past three months. Analysts and U.S. officials have questioned the expenditure of forces around the city, but military leaders have said they were successfully exhausting Russian forces by keeping them fixed in position.

Andriivka is located between the settlements of Kurdiuvka and the heights of Klischiivka in the Donetsk region, where fighting has been especially intense.

Ukraine's General Staff said its forces also inflicted heavy losses in the nearby village of Klishchiivka as part of the counteroffensive.

The gains in the south are considered more strategically significant since they bring Ukraine's troops closer to the Sea of Azov, where they could try to cut the land corridor to the Crimean Peninsula, which

Russia seized from Ukraine in 2014. Isolating Crimea would divide the Russian-occupied territory in the south and undermine Moscow's supply lines.

In the south, one person died and six were injured in shelling in the Kherson region, Ukraine's presidential office said. It also reported airstrikes on the town of Orikhiv in the Zaporizhzhia region.

Also Friday, Putin said that some 300,000 Russians have signed volunteer military contracts this year, noting that they were driven by "high patriotic motives."

Follow AP's coverage of the war in Ukraine: <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

North Korea's Kim gets a close look at Russian fighter jets as his tour narrows its focus to weapons

By HYUNG-JIN KIM, KIM TONG-HYUNG and EMMA BURROWS Associated Press

SEOUL, South Korea (AP) — North Korean leader Kim Jong Un inspected Russia's most advanced fighter jet as he toured an aircraft factory Friday on an extended trip that has raised concerns about banned weapons transfer deals between the increasingly isolated countries.

Since entering Russia aboard his armored train on Tuesday, Kim has met President Vladimir Putin and visited weapons and technology sites, underscoring deepening ties between the two nations locked in separate confrontations with the West. Foreign governments and experts speculate Kim will likely supply ammunition to Russia for its war efforts in Ukraine in exchange for receiving advanced weapons or technology from Russia.

On Friday, Russia's state media published video showing Kim's train pulling into a station in the far eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur. An Associated Press journalist saw Kim's convoy, his limousine sporting the Russian and North Korean flags, sweeping out of the station on the way to the aircraft factory.

Russia's Cabinet later released video showing Kim, on an elevated platform, looking at the cockpit of the Su-57 — Russia's most sophisticated fighter jet — while listening to its pilot. Kim beamed and clapped his hands when a Su-35 fighter jet landed after a demonstration flight.

According to a Russian Cabinet statement, Kim visited a facility producing Sukhoi SJ-100 passenger planes as well, accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister Denis Manturov.

"We have shown one of our leading aircraft plants to the leader of (North Korea)," Manturov said in the statement. "We are seeing potential for cooperation in the aircraft-making and other industries, which is particularly acute for solving our countries' task of achieving technological sovereignty."

Kim travels next to Vladivostok to view Russia's Pacific fleet, a university and other facilities, Putin told Russian media after he met with Kim on Wednesday.

Putin on Friday briefed Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko about his summit with Kim. During their meeting in the Black Sea resort of Sochi, Lukashenko suggested that Belarus could join Russia and North Korea in "three-way cooperation."

It was Kim's first foreign trip since April 2019, when he visited Vladivostok for his first meeting with Putin. The 2019 Russian visit came two months after Kim failed to win badly needed sanctions relief from the United States during a second summit with then U.S.-President Donald Trump in Vietnam.

Kim's earlier trip was likely primarily meant to seek Russian help to overcome the brunt of the U.S.-led sanctions. But this time, Putin appears to be desperate to receive North Korean conventional arms to replenish his exhausted inventory in the second year of Russia's war in Ukraine. Experts say Kim, in return, would seek Russian assistance to modernize his air force and navy, which are inferior to those of rival South Korea while Kim has devoted much of his own resources to his nuclear weapons program.

Asked whether Russia asked North Korea to send troops to fight alongside Russian soldiers in Ukraine, Putin flatly dismissed the idea, calling it "sheer nonsense," according to Russia's state media.

Putin reiterated that Russia would abide by U.N. sanctions, some of which ban North Korea from exporting or importing any weapons. Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov separately said that no agreements

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on bilateral military cooperation were signed after the Putin-Kim meeting Wednesday.

Experts say it's highly unlikely for North Korea to participate in the Russia-Ukraine war, though it has publicly supported Moscow's invasion. But they say North Korea and Russia aren't likely to publicize any deals on weapons supplies to avoid stronger international criticism.

The Kim-Putin summit took place at the Vostochny Cosmodrome, Russia's most important domestic launch center. The venue is probably linked to North Korean struggles to put into space an operational spy satellite to monitor U.S. and South Korean military movements.

Asked if Russia and North Korea could cooperate in space research, Putin said: "That's why we have come here. (Kim) shows keen interest in rocket technology. They're trying to develop space, too."

New video of Putin and Kim talking at the cosmodrome about rocket launches was released Friday. In the video, posted by Russian state news reporter Pavel Zarubin on his Telegram channel, Putin was heard telling Kim, "You are a specialist," after a translator was heard relaying the North Korean leader's comments on where the separated rocket stages would fall after launch.

Since last year, the U.S. has accused North Korea of providing ammunition, artillery shells and rockets to Russia, likely much of them copies of Soviet-era munitions. South Korean officials said North Korean weapons provided to Russia have already been used in Ukraine.

On Thursday evening, the national security advisers of the U.S., South Korea and Japan talked by phone and expressed "serious concerns" about prospective weapons deals between Russia and North Korea. They warned that Moscow and Pyongyang would "pay a clear price" if they go ahead with such deals, according to South Korea's presidential office.

After a meeting in Seoul discussing the allies' nuclear deterrence strategies, U.S. and South Korean officials on Friday stepped up their condemnation of the recent moves by Russia and North Korea.

Sasha Baker, the U.S. acting undersecretary of defense for policy, said Washington will continue to "try to identify and expose and counter Russian attempts to acquire military equipment, again, to prosecute their illegal war on Ukraine." South Korean Vice Foreign Minister Chang Ho-jin said Washington and Seoul, while tightening security cooperation, would ensure that Moscow faces consequences if it helps advance North Korea's weapons program.

The possibility that Russia may aid North Korea's nuclear program stoked anger in South Korea, where some argued that Seoul could provide lethal arms to Ukraine in retaliation. But South Korea's Defense Ministry said Thursday its policy of not supplying weapons to countries at war remains unchanged. Seoul has far limited its support of Ukraine to nonlethal military supplies and humanitarian items.

Some analysts question how much Russia would be willing to share its closely guarded high-tech weapons technologies with North Korea in return for its conventional arms. But others say Russia would do so because of its urgent need to refill its drained reserves.

Putin told reporters Wednesday that Russia and North Korea have "lots of interesting projects" in areas like transportation and agriculture and that Moscow is providing its neighbor with humanitarian aid.

The Kremlin said Thursday that Putin accepted Kim's invitation to Pyongyang, and that Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is expected to visit in October.

At Wednesday's summit, Kim vowed "full and unconditional support" for Putin in what he described as a "just fight against hegemonic forces to defend its sovereign rights, security and interests," in an apparent reference to the war in Ukraine.

Information on Kim's trip to Russia is largely from the two nations' official media outlets. North Korean media did not give updates Friday on Kim. They typically report on his activities a day later, apparently to meet the need for North Korean propaganda to glorify Kim.

Burrows reported from London.

More of AP's Ukraine coverage is available at <https://apnews.com/hub/russia-ukraine>

Younger voters will be critical in 2024. Biden and Trump are taking different paths to reach them

By CHRIS MEGERIAN, MICHELLE L. PRICE and THOMAS BEAUMONT Associated Press
HAMPTON, Va. (AP) — Students were dancing in the aisles and their seats in the Hampton University auditorium long before Vice President Kamala Harris took the stage for the first stop of her fall college tour. Jaden Clemons and Layth Carpenter, both 18-year-old freshmen, said they viewed Harris as “authentic” and “relatable” as the alum of Howard University, another historically Black school.

But neither was ready to commit to supporting Harris and Joe Biden next year, the first time they will be eligible to vote in a presidential election. And when it comes to lining up behind Democrats or Republicans, Clemons said, “We don’t even feel like it’s something that we need to choose.”

Getting students like these two off the sidelines is one of the top challenges for the White House as Biden seeks a second term as the oldest president in American history, and it’s one that Harris will confront as she crisscrosses between campuses in the coming weeks. Although young people lean left, they’re less likely to vote, and preventing them from tuning out is crucial in close campaigns that hinge on narrow margins.

And Biden isn’t the only candidate trying to line up support among young voters. Former President Donald Trump, the frontrunner for the Republican nomination in his comeback bid for the White House, visited Iowa State University last weekend.

He tossed autographed footballs into a cheering crowd during a cookout at Alpha Gamma Rho, an agricultural studies fraternity, and then attended the football game against in-state rival University of Iowa. “I guess the youth likes Trump,” he said.

John Brabender, a media consultant for the Trump campaign, said the former president tries to show up at events that lead to video on social media — for example, Trump’s appearance at a mixed martial arts fight in Las Vegas in July.

Since YouTube and TikTok are crucial platforms for young people, he said, “Our goal is to make sure content is created in an interesting enough way that it does get shared.

Drawing the attention of young people can be difficult, but Trump’s celebrity remains powerful. One of the few things that Isaac Gavin, a 21-year-old senior at Drake University in Des Moines, knows about the Republican primary is that Trump is a candidate again.

“I don’t even know all who is running. It seems like so many,” he said. “It’s confusing.”

Sen. Mitt Romney, a Utah Republican who announced his retirement this week, told reporters at the U.S. Capitol that he doubted Trump could make inroads with a new generation.

“My party is only going to be successful getting young people to vote for us if we’re talking about the future,” he said. “And that’s not happening so far.”

Biden won 61% of voters between the ages of 18 and 29 in 2020, according to AP VoteCast, making young voters a critical part of his coalition. However, his approval ratings within that age group now stand at 29% compared to 40% overall, according to a new AP-NORC poll.

At Hampton, Harris said there was too much at stake — abortion, voting rights, gun control — for students to miss their shot to shape the country’s future.

“What concerns me sometimes is that our young leaders will be told that their vote doesn’t matter,” she told the audience. “It’s because you voted,” Harris added, “that Joe Biden is president and I’m vice president of the United States.”

Harris’ college tour — with another stop Friday at North Carolina A&T in Greensboro, N.C. — is one part of a broader strategy.

The White House has worked with online influencers to reach people who don’t rely on traditional media. The Democratic National Committee is also building a network of student volunteers to organize on college campuses, and they flew banners over football games to urge voter registration.

“As Democrats did in 2020 and 2022, we will meet younger Americans where they are and turn their energy into action as part of our winning 2024 coalition,” said Kevin Munoz, a Biden campaign spokesman.

Given the liberal bent of younger voters, Democrats’ competition isn’t always Republicans but apathy or

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the lure of a third party. John Della Volpe, director of polling at the Harvard Kennedy School Institute of Politics, said the White House will need to break through to people who tend to tune out when it comes to politics so they're aware of what Biden has accomplished since taking office.

"It's just an incredibly challenging environment to communicate that message," said Della Volpe, who worked on Biden's campaign in 2020. "And unless those things are understood, cynicism grows."

Destiny Humphreys, a 22-year-old senior at South Carolina State University, said she fears that politicians always say they'll "listen to the people" only to backtrack once they're in a position of power.

"Everybody keeps saying the same thing just in different ways but ultimately, they're not listening to the people," she said.

On Thursday, Harris repeatedly tried to demonstrate that she understood young voters' concerns. She said they had taught her about "climate anxiety" and their fears of a warming world.

At another point, she asked how many students had participated in active shooter drills in their schools, and a sea of hands went up. Older people, Harris said, "don't get it."

Harris acknowledged that the White House has faced roadblocks, such as the U.S. Supreme Court decision that undermined its debt forgiveness plan. But she said she wouldn't stop fighting for the administration's agenda.

"I like to say, I eat 'no' for breakfast," she said. "I don't hear 'no.'"

Harris ended with a pitch for help.

"With each generation, we must fight for our rights and our freedoms," she said. "And so, just stay active. Because I and your country are counting on you."

After the event, Carpenter said she felt that Harris sort of "danced around" students' questions and blamed problems on Congress.

But Clemons might have been won over.

Biden and Harris are "strong candidates, in my eyes," he said, "mainly because of what I saw today."

Price reported from New York and Beaumont from Des Moines, Iowa. Reporting was contributed by Ayanna Alexander in Orangeburg, S.C., and Farnoush Amiri in Washington.

TikTok is hit with \$368 million fine under Europe's strict data privacy rules

By KELVIN CHAN AP Business Writer

LONDON (AP) — European regulators slapped TikTok with a \$368 million fine on Friday for failing to protect children's privacy, the first time that the popular short video-sharing app has been punished for breaching Europe's strict data privacy rules.

Ireland's Data Protection Commission, the lead privacy regulator for Big Tech companies whose European headquarters are largely in Dublin, said it was fining TikTok 345 million euros and reprimanding the platform for the violations dating to the second half of 2020.

The investigation found that the sign-up process for teen users resulted in settings that made their accounts public by default, allowing anyone to view and comment on their videos. Those default settings also posed a risk to children under 13 who gained access to the platform even though they're not allowed.

Also, a "family pairing" feature designed for parents to manage settings wasn't strict enough, allowing adults to turn on direct messaging for users aged 16 and 17 without their consent. And it nudged teen users into more "privacy intrusive" options when signing up and posting videos, the watchdog said.

TikTok said in a statement that it disagrees with the decision, "particularly the level of the fine imposed."

The company pointed out that the regulator's criticisms focused on features and settings dating back three years. TikTok said it had made changes well before the investigation began in September 2021, including making all accounts for teens under 16 private by default and disabling direct messaging for 13- to 15-year-olds.

"Most of the decision's criticisms are no longer relevant as a result of measures we introduced at the

start of 2021 — several months before the investigation began,” TikTok’s head of privacy for Europe, Elaine Fox, wrote in a blog post.

The Irish regulator has been criticized for not moving fast enough in its investigations into Big Tech companies since EU privacy laws took effect in 2018. For TikTok, German and Italian regulators disagreed with parts of a draft decision issued a year ago, delaying it further.

To avoid new bottlenecks, the Brussels headquarters of the 27-nation bloc has been given the job of enforcing new regulations to foster digital competition and clean up social media content — rules aimed at maintaining its position as a global leader in tech regulation.

In response to initial German objections, Europe’s top panel of data regulators said TikTok nudged teen users with pop-up notices that failed to lay out their choices in a neutral and objective way.

“Social media companies have a responsibility to avoid presenting choices to users, especially children, in an unfair manner — particularly if that presentation can nudge people into making decisions that violate their privacy interests,” said Anu Talus, chair of the European Data Protection Board.

The Irish watchdog, meanwhile, also had examined TikTok’s measures to verify whether users are at least 13 but found they didn’t break any rules.

The regulator is still carrying out a second investigation into whether TikTok complied with the EU’s General Data Protection Regulation when it transferred users’ personal information to China, where its owner, ByteDance, is based.

TikTok has faced accusations it poses a security risk over fears that users’ sensitive information could end up in China. It has embarked on a project to localize European user data to address those concerns: opening a data center in Dublin this month, which will be the first of three on the continent.

Data privacy regulators in Britain, which left the EU in January 2020, fined TikTok 12.7 million pounds (\$15.7 million) in April for misusing children’s data and violating other protections for young users’ personal information.

Instagram, WhatsApp and their owner Meta are among other tech giants that have been hit with big fines by the Irish regulator over the past year.

Like his dad, retiring Mitt Romney embraced moderate conservatism. He fears the GOP has lost its way

By MEAD GRUVER and JONATHAN J. COOPER Associated Press

Mitt Romney’s announcement this week that he will not seek another term in the U.S. Senate came with a distant echo of his father’s departure from politics five decades ago.

Mitt and his father, George Romney, at one time were top Republican contenders for the presidency, but fell short of the White House. Both ended their careers in elected office with a sense their party had lost its bearings. And both called for a more humane party, one that prioritizes civility and principle over resentments and score-settling.

In eras 50 years apart, George and Mitt Romney found themselves isolated in a GOP increasingly uninterested in their brand of genteel, country-club conservatism. In following a path forged by his father, sometimes with eerie similarities, Mitt Romney became the latest in a line of prominent establishment Republicans who pushed back against Donald Trump’s vision for the party, only to become isolated. Liz Cheney, who has declared it her mission to ensure Trump never returns to the Oval Office, was ousted in her U.S. House primary in Wyoming last year; Jeff Flake of Arizona opted not to run again for the U.S. Senate in 2018, condemning the “flagrant disregard of truth and decency.” That same year, Arizona Sen. John McCain, an unflinching Trump critic, died.

Mitt Romney’s career in business and politics included co-founding a private equity firm, being the savior of the Salt Lake City Olympics, serving as governor of Massachusetts and winning the GOP presidential nomination.

He entered Election Day of 2012 at the doorstep of becoming the nation’s 45th president. Today, he is stepping back believing that Trump, who did become the 45th president in 2016 and is the party’s front-

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runner for the 2024 nomination, has led the GOP and the country away from some of their most cherished constitutional principles.

The nation's many challenges call for a younger generation of leaders, the 76-year-old Romney said in his announcement Wednesday. He said the United States would be better served if Democratic President Joe Biden, 80, and Trump, 77, stepped aside from the 2024 campaign.

How Romney went from Republican standard-bearer to outlier coincided with Trump's takeover of the GOP and the rise of the populist, anti-elite movement he leads. Romney was the only Republican senator to vote twice to impeach Trump. Romney was one of the few elected Republicans willing to criticize Trump in public, and he felt the pressure from his party's base.

Skirmishes with the base were familiar for Romney, who was a teenager when his father first won elected office.

George Romney was a six-year governor of Michigan in the 1960s and clashed with Barry Goldwater, the Arizona senator who was the party's 1964 presidential nominee, over the Civil Rights Act. The elder Romney was seen as a leading GOP contender for president in 1968, but his candidacy collapsed, fueled in part by a gaffe in explaining his change of position on the Vietnam War.

Richard Nixon won the Republican nomination and was elected president that year. He appointed Romney to head the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, where Romney worked toward racial integration and clashed with the president.

George Romney was a gladiator with an appetite for political combat, particularly with his party's right wing, said Geoff Kabaservice, a scholar at the center-right Niskanen Center who has written about the GOP's rightward shift since the 1960s. Mitt Romney took on the more diplomatic persona of his mother, Lenore Romney, who ran for Senate from Michigan in 1970.

The younger Romney campaigned hard for his mother, who eked out a narrow victory in a contentious, ideologically driven primary. That fight hurt her in the general election, which she lost overwhelmingly.

"Mitt Romney was willing on an individual basis to stand up against Donald Trump. But Mitt Romney was not interested in trying to lead a Republican revolt against Trump," Kabaservice said. "And Trump ultimately was willing to tear the Republican Party apart if he didn't get his way."

Mitt Romney spoke wistfully of his father's political era when talking to Utah-based reporters this week.

"It's hard for me to imagine what the party was like during his time," Romney said, remembering a time when Americans respected members of other political parties even when they disagreed.

"I think we've become more suspicious of people on the other side of the aisle," he said. "In part that's the result of social media that feeds us stories and information that we find interesting through an algorithm that actually encourages resentment and anger."

He said he belongs to the "wise wing of the Republican Party."

Romney said he's "not retiring from the fight" but did not share any specific plans for after he leaves office in January 2025.

He's often been the subject of speculation about running an independent campaign for president, including as a potential candidate for No Labels, a group that is preparing to run a moderate ticket for president.

No Labels has had "no engagement at all" with Romney regarding a presidential run as part of the group's potential third-party bid, according to a No Labels senior official who spoke on the condition of anonymity to disclose private discussions.

But the group's leaders released a statement late Wednesday lauding Romney as "an exceptional public servant."

"We welcome Sen. Romney to support our movement – and the will of most Americans – for more options in the 2024 election," they said.

Romney considered an independent bid for president in 2024 but concluded it would only serve to help Trump get back to the White House, according to an excerpt of an upcoming biography by McKay Cop-pins, a journalist for The Atlantic who interviewed Romney extensively.

Romney said he decided months ago not to run again for the Senate. He was dismayed by what he saw

as an authoritarian current rising in the GOP, and also cognizant of his advanced age.

"A very large portion of my party really doesn't believe in the Constitution," he told Coppins.

Romney's departure from the political scene leaves an open question about the type of Republican who will succeed him in Utah, a deeply Republican state where the majority of residents are, like Romney, members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, known widely as the Mormon church. Many church members find Trump's infidelity, profanity and anti-immigrant rhetoric anathema to their faith.

The state has elected both Romney, the most outspoken Republican Trump critic in the Senate, and Sen. Mike Lee, a brash conservative. Until recently, at least, the state's version of Republicanism made room for both.

"It's unclear what direction Utah voters will go," said Christopher F. Karpowitz, a political science professor at Brigham Young University. "Is the next senator going to be more in the mold of Mike Lee or more in the mold of Mitt Romney? I think that's the open question at this point."

AP National Political Writer Steve Peoples in New York contributed to this report.

Biden's Medicare price negotiation push is broadly popular. But he's not getting much credit

By SEUNG MIN KIM and LINLEY SANDERS Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — President Joe Biden is trumpeting Medicare's new powers to negotiate directly with drugmakers on the cost of prescription medications — but a poll shows that any immediate political boost that Biden gets for enacting the overwhelmingly popular policy may be limited.

Three-quarters of Americans, or 76%, favor allowing the federal health care program for the elderly to negotiate prices for certain prescription drugs. That includes strong majorities of Democrats (86%) and Republicans (66%), according to a new poll from The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research. About one in five Americans are neutral on the issue, while 6% outright oppose it.

But the poll shows Biden's approval rating, at 40%, is about where it's been for the last year. Americans are split on how the Democratic president is handling the issue of prescription drug prices — 48% approve, making it a relative strong point for him, but 50% disapprove.

Seven in 10 Democrats approve of how Biden is handling the issue of prescription drug prices, compared to about a third of independents and about a quarter of Republicans. Even so, Republicans are still much more likely to approve of how Biden is handling prescription drug prices than they are to approve of his job efforts overall (8%).

Even among the Americans who support allowing Medicare to negotiate drug prices, approval of Biden's handling of the issue remains relatively tepid. A slim majority (55%) approve, but 43% disapprove.

Interviews with poll respondents suggest that from conservative-leaning to liberal voters, Americans want the federal government to be more aggressive on negotiating drug prices with pharmaceutical companies in order to lower medication costs. The gap between those who support the new Medicare policy — a long-sought goal of various presidents and lawmakers — and those who approve of Biden's handling of the issue also suggests the administration continues to struggle to connect the White House's accomplishments to Biden's personal popularity as he readies a reelection bid.

That challenge is even more critical because the core of Biden's reelection pitch to voters is selling his legislative achievements and showing that he is a leader who has accomplished for Americans where other presidents had fallen short, such as giving Medicare negotiating powers and enacting a massive bipartisan infrastructure law.

Esperanza Baeza, a teacher's assistant in Chicago, said she was recently prescribed medication that was prohibitively expensive, and she had to comparison shop before she found drugs that were relatively affordable. She said while she understood that presidents can't fix all problems, she wondered whether Biden was doing enough on the issue of drug pricing.

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Told about Medicare's new authority to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies, Baeza, a Democrat, responded, "That's awesome."

"I'm 55. I know pretty soon, I'm retiring," she said. "I would like to educate myself more on that and I'm hoping I don't have to struggle with that once I retire."

The new price negotiations come from a provision of the Inflation Reduction Act, a package of Democratic priorities signed into law last year that focuses largely on climate and health care policies. The White House last month formally rolled out the first 10 drugs that Medicare will negotiate on, which include the blood thinner Eliquis and Jardiance, a diabetes treatment.

"For years, Big Pharma blocked this," Biden said during an East Room event marking the announcement. "They kept prescription drug prices high to increase their profits. They extended patents on existing drugs to suppress fair competition instead of innovating, playing games with pricing so they could charge whatever they can."

"But this is — finally, finally, finally, we had enough votes, by a matter of one, to beat Big Pharma," he continued. "Well, we did it."

Ellen Daily, a 73-year-old retiree in Carrollton, Texas, said she strongly favors allowing Medicare to negotiate on drug prices. Both she and her husband are on the federal health program. But Daily, who said she disapproves of Biden's overall job performance, said the president's role in unlocking that authority for Medicare was not enough to change her outlook on him.

"They only negotiated on 10 drugs," said Daily, who said she is a political independent and holds fiscally conservative views. "It should've been across the board; every one of the drugs that Medicare pays for should be negotiated."

It will take three years for the lower prices for the 10 drugs to go into effect, and the industry's lobbying group, Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers of America, has already sued the administration to halt the plan. But Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services will add 15 more drugs to its negotiation list for 2027 and another 15 for 2028, while adding up to 20 more for each year after that.

Annie Lok, 45, who lives in Queens, New York, also said she does not approve of Biden's handling of prescription drugs because he needs to do more to lower costs for more medicines across the board.

"In my opinion, they should be setting prices or negotiating prices for pretty much all prescription drugs. And if that's not practical, then many more than 10," said Lok, who said she is a registered Democrat, although she doesn't consider herself to be part of the party because her views are to the left.

Lok, who works in the health care industry, added: "I believe there should be health care for all and so obviously prescription drugs is part of that. It's a basic need and for me to know that there are people who can't afford it in order to stay alive is not acceptable."

Biden himself has signaled some messaging challenges when it comes to his signature law. At the event, he said the Inflation Reduction Act, which passed Congress with no Republican support, "in a sense, is misnamed."

"We did lower inflation, but there are many other things in that legislation," he said. On health care, the law caps at \$20,000 how much Medicare beneficiaries have to pay every year out of pocket for drugs starting in 2025, while a provision that would limit out-of-pocket insulin costs for those on Medicare to \$35 per month has already gone into effect.

The poll of 1,146 adults was conducted Sept. 7-11, 2023, using a sample drawn from NORC's probability-based AmeriSpeak Panel, which is designed to be representative of the U.S. population. The margin of sampling error for all respondents is plus or minus 3.9 percentage points.

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Today in History: September 16, George W. Bush says of 9/11 attackers that US will "hunt them down"

By The Associated Press undefined

Today in History

Today is Saturday, Sept. 16, the 259th day of 2023. There are 106 days left in the year.

Today's Highlights in History:

On Sept. 16, 2001, President George W. Bush, speaking on the South Lawn of the White House, said there was "no question" Osama bin Laden and his followers were the prime suspects in the Sept. 11 attacks; Bush pledged the government would "find them, get them running and hunt them down."

On this date:

In 1630, the Massachusetts village of Shawmut changed its name to Boston.

In 1810, Mexico began its revolt against Spanish rule.

In 1908, General Motors was founded in Flint, Michigan, by William C. Durant.

In 1940, Samuel T. Rayburn of Texas was elected Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

In 1966, the Metropolitan Opera officially opened its new opera house at New York's Lincoln Center for the Performing Arts with the world premiere of Samuel Barber's "Antony and Cleopatra."

In 1972, "The Bob Newhart Show" premiered on CBS.

In 1974, President Gerald R. Ford announced a conditional amnesty program for Vietnam war deserters and draft-evaders.

In 1982, the massacre of between 1,200 and 1,400 Palestinian men, women and children at the hands of Israeli-allied Christian Phalange militiamen began in west Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps.

In 1987, two dozen countries signed the Montreal Protocol, a treaty designed to save the Earth's ozone layer by calling on nations to reduce emissions of harmful chemicals by the year 2000.

In 2007, O.J. Simpson was arrested in the alleged armed robbery of sports memorabilia collectors in Las Vegas. (Simpson was later convicted of kidnapping and armed robbery and sentenced to nine to 33 years in prison; he was released in 2017.)

In 2013, Aaron Alexis, a former U.S. Navy reservist, went on a shooting rampage inside the Washington Navy Yard, killing 12 people before being shot dead by police.

In 2016, after five years of promoting a false conspiracy theory about Barack Obama's birthplace, Republican Donald Trump abruptly reversed course, acknowledging that the president was born in America.

In 2018, at least 17 people were confirmed dead from Hurricane Florence as catastrophic flooding spread across the Carolinas.

In 2021, Jane Powell, a star of Hollywood's golden age musicals, died at her Connecticut home at age 92.

Today's Birthdays: Actor Janis Paige is 101. Bluesman Billy Boy Arnold is 88. Movie director Jim McBride is 82. Actor Linda Miller is 81. R&B singer Betty Kelley (Martha & the Vandellas) is 79. Musician Kenney Jones (Small Faces; Faces; The Who) is 75. Actor Susan Ruttan is 75. Rock musician Ron Blair (Tom Petty & the Heartbreakers; Mudcrutch) is 75. Actor Ed Begley Jr. is 74. Country singer David Bellamy (The Bellamy Brothers) is 73. Actor Mickey Rourke is 71. Actor-comedian Lenny Clarke is 70. Actor Kurt Fuller is 70. Jazz musician Earl Klugh is 70. Actor Christopher Rich is 70. TV personality Mark McEwen is 69. Baseball Hall of Famer Robin Yount is 68. Magician David Copperfield is 67. Country singer-songwriter Terry McBride is 65. Actor Jennifer Tilly is 65. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Orel Hershiser is 65. Baseball Hall of Famer Tim Lincecum is 64. Actor Jayne Brook is 63. Singer Richard Marx is 60. Comedian Molly Shannon is 59. Singer Marc Anthony is 55. News anchor/talk show host Tamron Hall is 53. Comedian-actor Amy Poehler is 52. Actor Toks Olagundoye (tohks oh-lah-GOON'-doh-yay) is 48. Country singer Matt Stillwell is 48. Singer Musiq (MYOO'-sihk) is 46. Actor Michael Mosley is 45. Rapper Flo Rida is 44. Actor Alexis Bledel is 42. Actor Sabrina Bryan is 39. Actor Madeline Zima is 38. Actor Ian Harding is 37. Actor Kyla Pratt is 37. Actor Daren Kagasoff is 36. Rock singer Teddy Geiger is 35. Actor-dancer Bailey De Young is 34. Rock singer-musician Nick Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 31. Actor Elena Kampouris is 26.